

Harry Potter and the Heir of Magic

Summary: Nothing had gone right. Fate's plan was torn apart by the death of Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived. In order to set time and the destiny of the Wizarding World, fate delivers a helping hand.

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Chapter 1: The Founder's Prophecy

Graveyard, Little Hangleton, UK

"Avada Kedavra!" Voldemort cried, pointing his wand at Harry. As the jet of green light sped towards him, Harry's life flashed before his eyes. Here he was being held against the tombstone as death closed the distance between him and the newly resurrected Dark Lord. Harry closed his eyes and envisioned everything that had happened in the last hour.

~Flashback~

Harry knew as soon as he and Cedric touched the cup that something was wrong, but before he had a chance to react, that cold voice he chilled the air and sealed the older champion's fate. "Kill the spare!" Surprise shown in Cedric's face as the killing curse struck him, while Harry stared at him hopelessly as his body hit the ground. A second later Harry found himself bound by invisible ropes and held against a tombstone that looked like the angel of death as the traitor raised his wand and Harry knew no more as the red stunner struck him squarely in his chest.

When he came to, Harry remembered what happened and began frantically searching for his wand. "Harry my child, your wand is in my possession until I may be in the proper state to duel you. So sit still and save your energy as you will need it. It is time for you to watch my rebirth." Harry heard the cold voice coming from an inhuman bundle in Wormtail's arms, realizing it was Voldemort as a chill ran down his spine.

It seemed pointless to Harry as he squirmed wildly, trying to free himself from the invisible ropes that bound him as the arm of the statue held him steady. Harry watched as Wormtail placed the bundle that was Voldemort into a cauldron that held a dark potion

which had been set in the middle of the clearing, right next to the statue where Harry was bound.

As soon as Voldemort splashed down into the potion Wormtail began the ritual, which would resurrect his dark master. "Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son," Wormtail said as he blindly raised his wand and as Harry watched in horror, a bone rose from an open casket right in front of Harry. Wormtail levitated the bone over to the cauldron and it caught fire just before it splashed into the potion, which hissed slightly before it stopped.

Now Wormtail's typically pale complexion had grown paler as he whimpered, "Flesh of the servant, w-willingly given, you will revive your master!" Harry watched with shock as Wormtail did something in front of Harry's eyes that he would never have thought Wormtail would have had the nerve to do. Wormtail pulled out a long silver dagger from within his robes and gasped as the former Marauder willingly cut his own hand off, letting out a blood curdling shriek, which echoed throughout the graveyard, before it too caught fire and dropped into the potion. Suddenly the fire beneath the cauldron flared as the potion hissed much more strongly this time.

Finally Wormtail turned and walked towards Harry as he almost gleefully with a black lust in his eyes and reached forward, dagger in hand, as he sliced Harry's sleeve and with his lone shaking hand, pulled out a vial, levitating it into the air. Slowly Wormtail said, "Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken, you will revive your foe." Harry screamed out in pain as Wormtail poised the dagger at Harry's left forearm and slit it open. The already pale and weak Wormtail carefully took some of the blood on the dagger and flicked it three times into the potion as he spoke the words, pausing each time as the drops of Harry's blood hit the potion. As the last word was spoken and the last drop of blood hit the potion, it flashed brightly causing Harry to snap back to attention as the agony from the white hot pain went screaming threw his body and his scar felt like it was on fire.

Harry watched in disbelief as the cauldron tipped over and seemed to melt away as a ball of fire, flesh, and dark shadows levitated in the air and seemed to come together as the body of a fully-grown tall and pale man formed before Harry and Wormtail. A hiss came from Voldemort as his long, scaly fingers stroked his bald head, reveling in his new body. His face had a pale, malicious complexion

with slits for eyes and a nose, making him look like the snake he was. What made the man truly evil in appearance was the glowing red eyes that had suddenly flashed in anger towards Harry and Wormtail in almost a painfully obviously way, causing Harry's scar to flash in pain. Wormtail bowed to Voldemort, cowering before him.

"My wand, Wormtail." Voldemort's voice was high and cold as he reached out his hand and to receive the wand from the cowering man before him. "Harry, at least we meet again. Tonight you have found yourself tied to the gravestone of my late father, a muggle, common and filthy with not one ounce of magic in him. However, without him, I would not be standing before you today, so he did in fact have one use in death," commented Voldemort. Voldemort turned towards Wormtail, who was clutching at his stump of an arm and hissed, "Give me your arm, Wormtail."

Wormtail scurried forward and handed the dark wizard his arm from his amputated hand as he said, "O, thank you master, you are too kind."

Voldemort hissed and struck Wormtail with the back of his hand and said, "Fool, I wish to have your left arm."

This caused Wormtail to whimper in pain and confusion as he offered his master his left arm, "M-Master?"

Seconds later Harry watched as Voldemort raised up the sleeve of Wormtail's left arm, revealing the dark mark in all its apparent glory. It was a hideous looking tattoo and it writhed under the man's skin as if it were alive. Wormtail's eyes grew wide and he shrieked in agony as the evil wizard pressed the tip of his wand to the dark mark, causing Wormtail's knees to give out at the pain from the mark burning black on his arm. "Now, they've all felt it, while many will come crawling back, still others will attempt to ignore it. They will pay the ultimate price Harry, much like you will in a matter of moments."

Soon, as Harry looked around the graveyard, the death eaters arrived to answer their master's call. A cyclone appeared in the sky as what appeared to be dark tornadoes soared down from it and began striking the ground, each leaving a wizard in dark robes and gleaming, evil looking, white masks covering their faces and hiding their identity.

Voldemort gazed at his death eaters as they formed a silent circle around him, and, as Harry watched, Voldemort began pacing around to the nearest of his followers. "Thirteen years my friends. Thirteen years it's been, and still you answer me just as if it were yesterday. However, I confess myself disappointed. I smell guilt, regret, and even deception from many of you. Yet, above all, I sense foolishness. Why have none of you ever sought me out since that fateful night? Did any of you pursue each and every avenue, pursuing every possible lead, in order to determine that I was not indeed, somewhere? Did each and every one of you who escaped Azkaban by denouncing me truly believe me dead? I, Lord Voldemort, who has gone farther along the path to immortality than any other? For thirteen years I was trapped, virtually powerless, being less than even the least of spirits, forced to live off of others, just to survive. Yet, none came and I actually felt vulnerable."

The Dark Lord paused and glanced around at his followers, wondering if any would dare claim loyalty. After all, for thirteen years he had been stripped of his powers by a mere boy!

Voldemort spoke again. "Yet, I was still alive, despite everything, despite the loss of my body and powers, and despite most of my followers leaving me to my own devices. Though some did not, and continued to fight in my name, but they were few and far between," said Voldemort softly. "The one's among you who remained faithful and made an effort found themselves either in Azkaban or dead. So, even though their efforts failed and were wasted, at the very least they tried to keep up the battle."

Suddenly one of the death eaters stepped forward and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes as he said, "Forgive me master. I have kept close ties to the minister and others in order to gain information. If I had ever heard anything of your whereabouts I would have sought you out immediately."

Crucio," Voldemort said lazily. For a few seconds the Dark Lord watched as his death eater fell to the ground, screaming in agony, before he lifted the torture curse. Voldemort merely helped the death eater to his feet and said, "Now, now Lucius my slick and slippery friend. I have heard stories of your so called innocence, but also that you still have yet to renounce the old ways."

Voldemort then went around the circle making comments about each of the death eaters in turn saying names such as, "Avery, Macnair, Crabbe, Nott, and Goyle" and passed over a few others that any outside observer would assume to be less important followers. As he passed each one in turn, a wave of his hand vanished their masks, causing each man's knees to buckle as they fell to the ground. He then said, "Many of my most faithful reside in Azkaban. They suffered in my name rather than renounce me, unlike many of you who stand here before me tonight and I will ensure they will be rewarded amply for their loyalty faithfulness to me. For now Wormtail come here so I may reward you properly."

Wormtail, who had been cowering before Voldemort, clutching at the stump of his arm, moved forward. "I returned to you my lord. I returned to you and aided you these entire months master," Wormtail squeaked as he crawled forward and kissed the hem of the Dark Lord's robes.

"Out of fear, Wormtail, not loyalty. The inactions of my death eaters have set our plans back years, but I am willing to give each and every one of you a final chance to redeem yourselves. You all have much to do before you work yourselves up in stature among my ranks and debts must be repaid, while time may ease some wounds. Even so, Wormtail you have already repaid some of your debt. While you are cowardly and traitorous above all the others, your sacrifice partially allowed me to regain my body. You returned to me out of fear for what your old friends would do to you. Still, you have been helpful these past several months and I reward loyalty. Hold out your hand Wormtail," Voldemort hissed.

Harry watched in horror and fascination as what appeared to be a glove of silver formed at the stump of Wormtail's wrist and fastened itself there. Wormtail leaned down and picked up a rock, and as Harry gasped in awe, he crushed it into dust. Looking up Voldemort smiled, the slits of his eyes glowing an inhuman red.

"It's beautiful, my lord," cried Wormtail happily as he examined his new hand, while he turned it over looking absolutely ecstatic at the beautiful silver appendage. Wormtail stepped forward and said, "Thank you master, you are most kind. It is wonderful, more than I deserve."

This caused Voldemort to turn and glare at Wormtail as he sneered and said, "I am not kind but I do award those that are faithful and competent."

"Ah yes, I almost forget to introduce our guest of honor here tonight. Although; I doubt it is needed. I hear that you are almost as famous as I am these days. Oh Harry, how such pathetic myths have fed your legend. Such lies have fed your glory, when you are nothing to me. I am Lord Voldemort, the greatest and most feared wizard of all time. Surely, you did not think that a mere baby could vanquish the heir of Salazar Slytherin himself? Shall I reveal what really happened that night? Should I divulge how I truly lost my powers?" Voldemort stared into emerald green eyes literally glowing with fury and uncontrolled raw and wild magic as Harry glared down his nemesis, remembering the horrors of that fateful night, almost fifteen years previous.

Voldemort walked up to Harry as his death eaters, wrapped in their dark cloaks, with faces hidden behind their masks, sneered at the so called chosen-one. "My faithful followers I stand here before you tonight to tell you the story of how a mere child could have defeated me. Yes my friends. It was love that saved dear little Harry Potter that night. The sacrifice of his mother shielded him from me, giving him the ultimate protection. She died to protect him. It was old magic, which I should have foreseen. It left a lingering protection bound to his blood. I could not touch him. When I cast the killing curse on young Harry here, my own magic rebounded on me, destroying my powers. However," Voldemort smiled evilly as he reached up and pressed his forefinger to the cursed scar, causing pain that felt like a thousand needles of white fire spread throughout Harry's body as he cried out. "Today I stand before you however, with my body returned and the foolish girl's protections gone. Behold my brilliance. I can touch you now!" Voldemort's smile became a sneer as his tongue lashed out like a snake's.

"I'm going to kill you Harry," Voldemort said, laughing mirthfully as Harry fought relentlessly, but in vain, to break free of the statue and make it back to the cup that he saw laying about 20 yards back behind Voldemort to his left. "No Harry, there will be no escape for you tonight. Far too long, has your very existence mocked me. You should not have been alive to make it here tonight, Harry. All these years the wizarding world has hailed you as a hero, and doubted my power. No longer will I allow this. Tomorrow, when the sun rises

upon the gates of the ministry, the wizarding world will know that I have returned. They will gaze upon the corpse of their hero and never again will anyone doubt the power of Lord Voldemort!"

Harry watched as Voldemort walked forward and with a wave of his wand, the statue released Harry. Harry refused to take his eyes off Voldemort as he reached to pick up his wand and stand facing the Dark Lord. "Yes, take your wand Harry. Face me like a true warrior wizard. Stand with courage and die with honor tonight, just as your father did all those years ago," Voldemort said. "Now foolish boy, you will die tonight, but not before you learn to rue the day you crossed wands with Lord Voldemort."

Harry slowly grabbed his wand with his good and more importantly wand arm before Voldemort coolly said Crucio, causing Harry to writhe on the ground as every nerve ending in his power screamed as white hot needles of pain lanced through him causing his vision began to become blurry as he started to lose consciousness once again.

Voldemort roughly raised up Harry, who was still shaking from the curse, and invisible hands enclosed Harry's throat roughly cutting the air off to Harry's lungs. Voldemort lowered his wand and watched as Harry sank to the ground. While Harry struggled back to his feet Voldemort gazed at his followers, who were cackling at Harry's predicament.

"I assume that you have been taught to duel, Harry? It is time for you to meet your end," Voldemort said as his eyes darted around at his death eater's.

Harry's reply was swift, "Yes, I might have picked up a few things, but I doubt you'd notice, seeing as you don't seem to understand how to duel yourself. You really should pay more attention to your teacher and face your opponent Riddle, unless you want to be hexed in the back. After all, we might as well get this over with. You've already almost killed me tonight with all of your rambling. I was afraid you'd have to kill me in my sleep from growing so bored of it. You really need some new material to work with, but after tonight it won't matter."

Voldemort then looked at Harry who was holding his wand tightly and said; "Now Harry, we shall duel to your death. First we bow."

Harry's knees were forced to bend by a death eater before Voldemort raised his wand and uttered Avada Kedavra, while Harry stepped to the side to avoid the deadly curse.

Harry could feel his blood boiling as raw magic fed him with more power than he had ever realized he had as he replied. "You are pathetic Riddle. How bout you tell your followers how their master's blood is impure. Tell them the truth Tom that they bow to a mudblood." Voldemort's eyes shown with fury and Harry had to dodge behind a tombstone and crouched low as a pale yellow beam shot from Voldemort's wand and shattered the top of the tombstone.

"Come on out Harry, I want to hear you beg for death, like your miserable little mudblood mother did before I killed her. I want you to face me when you die! I am going to make you beg for death, and I, being a merciful Lord, will grant it. I want to see the light leave your eyes as the only hope for the wizarding world is dashed upon the old rocks of this cemetery! Avada Kedavra!" Voldemort cried as bright green light lit the cemetery before it blew the statue of a grim apart.

As Harry crouched there, he thought about his parents. He could see them again. This wizard was the one who murdered his parents and cost him his family and childhood he had wanted so badly. All Harry had ever wanted was to have a family that loved him and to be normal, not famous, not the boy-who-lived nonsense. Just Harry. 'No' Harry thought. 'There will be no more running. No more hiding. Whether I live or die, this ends tonight.'

Harry watched Voldemort's eyes narrow as he summoned his Gryffindor courage and stood from behind the broken statue and looked at Voldemort.

Voldemort held his wand steady at Harry and scream "Do you really want another taste of the pain, young Harry? Crucio!"

Instantly, Harry tasted blood from biting his tongue as pain beyond belief surged through his body once more. Once again, he refused to give the evil wizard the satisfaction of crying out. Fortunately, even though his body was aching, he was able to maintain his wits about him and briefly adjusted his concentration to get through the pain before his body collapsed to the ground, still spasming from the effects of the curse.

"Potter, this is what you get for daring to stand up to me, for having the nerve to defy me," Voldemort said softly. "Admit to your foolishness and I might be kind and grant you a quick death. After all, are you truly brave enough to prolong your suffering, knowing that you can not stand against my brilliance and might?"

Harry said nothing as he stared defiantly at Voldemort, wand at the ready.

Voldemort looked coldly at Harry. "You foolish boy. I am superior in every way. Admit it. Say it to all these witnesses here tonight that no one alive stands a chance to defeat me. Imperio!"

Harry immediately felt light headed, as a wave of euphoria swept over his mind, and a voice in his mind said, 'Why not? I'm dead anyways.' Still a smaller voice gained strength as Harry fought against Voldemort's will, which was much stronger than Crouch Jr.'s when he taught Harry to throw off the curse.

"No, Riddle," Harry replied quietly, glaring defiantly once more at Voldemort, who didn't even seem to notice as he attempted to force more of his will upon Harry.

"Say it Potter. Tell the world how you were a fool to step in the path of the Dark Lord, and that you deserve to be put down," Voldemort sneered.

"Bite me. I will never submit to you, Tom, you snake faced bastard," Harry spoke calmly as he felt another push against his mind just before Voldemort reared back and stumbled, as if shoved hard by someone.

Voldemort stared coldly at Harry before he replied, "Say it Harry. Tell them all that I am Lord Voldemort, the greatest wizard that ever lived!"

"No!" Harry cried out as he once again threw off the curse, causing the Dark Lord to stumble from the backlash.

"Stupefy!" Harry cast his stunner at Voldemort and almost too fast for the eye to see, Voldemort's wand whipped up as he lashed out and cried, "Avada Kedavra!"

The twin bolts, one green and one red, race towards their targets before the spells collided between them and thick, golden beams of light connected the two wands as their owners fought to keep control of their violently shaking wands. Harry and Voldemort gripped their wands tightly to prevent them from flying from their grasps.

The death eaters could do nothing as a great, golden cage surrounded Harry and the Dark Lord preventing any of them from disarming Harry forcibly while Voldemort screamed out, "Do nothing! He is mine!"

A ball of raw magic formed where the magic of the two wands collided and began inching along the golden beam towards Harry. Somehow, knowing that his very life depended on keeping the ball of magic away from him, Harry began to will it back towards Voldemort with all his might. Harry thought he had won as it had almost reached Voldemort, and he fed the last of his strength into the beam of magic forcing the energy towards the Dark Lord, intent on ending the threat forever, even though he knew he would never make it out of the cemetery alive. Voldemort's death eaters would make certain of that.

All at once, time seemed to stop as the ball of magic was about to connect to the end of Voldemort's wand before the Dark Lord ripped his wand arm up, breaking the connection and stepped to the side as he felt the raw fury of wild untamed and ancient magic blow by him. In this instant, the Dark Lord knew fear. Voldemort knew for certain that this child wielded significant, untapped and untrained power that would grow to become a threat to his reign.

A cold shiver a fear ran down Voldemort's spine for the first time since he had face the demon within he circle while completing the Ritual Of The Damned as his ritual enhanced senses alerted him to the power of the Old Magic practically singing to him from the child's blood. Voldemort felt the first signs of fatigue coming on him, which surprised him greatly, and that was not an easy thing to do. He had never felt tired like this before, and he had faced some of the most powerful wizards in the world and destroyed them. Yet, this child was able to keep up with him, even with a new body that had endurance far beyond human norms.

A shame. Such power would have been useful to me. Fortunately the old fool never took his time to train his golden boy, because at

the height of his power, he would rival even me! Nevertheless, it ends tonight. After this the world shall know the glory that is Lord Voldemort!' Voldemort raised his wand once more and pointed it at Harry, who was trying to get up from the ground, panting and exhausted.

~End Flashback~

"Avada Kedavra!"

'I never could beat him. I never stood a chance. I'm an underage wizard with no training, and Voldemort has more power than any other wizard in the world save Dumbledore himself. How could anyone ever assume that I, Harry James Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived and the supposed Chosen-One, would ever be a threat to Voldemort? I guess this is it then. Mom and dad, I'm sorry you died in vain. He killed me anyways, but at least I can finally see you.'

Harry's eyes opened and he stared death in the face as he drew up his Gryffindor courage right as the Killing Curse hit him square in the chest, ripping his soul from his body instantly. Harry cursed Voldemort for his life and his family just as his vision went black and he knew no more.

In Between

Harry felt like he was floating, and he felt no pain. 'Am I dead? I know that AK hit me.' As Harry looked around, he found himself in a wide open field, standing at the edge of a fountain set in the middle. As he looked around, Harry noticed a few trees in the distance, which made him feel oddly at ease. 'I wonder what's going on here. Where am I?'

"To answer your first question, young one, you are neither dead nor alive. You are in between, on an ancient isle that once receded from the mortal world under my power."

Startled, Harry turned towards the voice and saw a wizard in dark blue robes, staff in hand. The strange wizard appeared to be mid aged, yet his eyes had a depth that seemed to see right into Harry's soul and his voice rang with a deep wisdom that seemed to speak straight to his heart.

Harry took a cautious step backwards and asked, "Who are you and how did I get here? The last thing I remember, Voldemort hit me with the killing curse."

The man chuckled, reminding Harry of Dumbledore, before he answered. "Who am I? That question shall be answered in time, but that time is not now. When the time is right, you will know my identity. You have been brought here because for the last fifteen years in the mortal realm, nothing has gone right. Many things have come to pass which should not have been, and many things which should have been have not occurred. You were born to bear the weight of the wizarding world on your shoulders, a champion, yet you fell."

Harry frowned, thinking of all the people who expected him to be the one to beat Voldemort, while they ridiculed him and sat back feeling safe that they weren't the ones out there risking their lives fighting the death eaters and Voldemort. "What do you mean by 'a champion'? I'm getting sick of everyone expecting me to be the one to end this war. I'm only fourteen years old! All I have ever wanted was to be normal, yet that snake faced bastard took that away from me when he killed my parents when I was a baby."

"Alas, I am not the one to begin to answer these questions. First, you need to know of your ancestry, and the legacy which came to fruition in you." The wizard appeared apprehensive as he looked over Harry's shoulder.

"Sweetheart, you are ready. It is time for us to explain to you about your heritage, and why you have come here, before we must ask you to make a choice," a familiar voice said from behind Harry, causing his eyes to grow wide as he spun around.

Harry looked at the twenty-one year old beauty. She had bright red hair and brilliant, familiar green eyes, just like Harry's and he could see the love and regret in her eyes as she looked on him and opened her arms towards him. Harry was stunned at the realization of who she was and who the man beside her was, who had jet black, untidy hair, and a mischievous grin on his face as he looked at his son. "Mum, dad is that really you," he barely choked out before he ran into her arms as his father hugged them both close.

As Lily watched her son, her heart broke at the pain and sorrow in his eyes, caused by years of neglect and abuse. "Honey, we have

always been here watching you. Your father and I are very proud of you and the man you are on the path to becoming. We're so sorry that we have not been able to be there to help you and guide you, especially through the living hell my sister and her good for nothing oaf of a husband have put you through, along with that poor child they ruined," she said with tears of joy and sorrow streamed down her face.

Harry stood for a moment. 'Well, they said I'm in between, so I guess I'm not totally dead yet. Not that it makes any difference. I'll still never be able to win.' "It's not your fault mum. I let you both down. I wasn't able to defeat him. Your deaths were in vain," he said softly, while looking into his mother's eyes, praying that she could forgive him for wasting her sacrifice."

"Harry James Potter! Never believe that you could let us down in any way, shape, or form. It's not your fault that you were unprepared. Do you even know why Voldemort chose to come after us and tried to kill you? Do you know why we went into hiding?" Lily's eyes flashed as she waited for an answer.

Harry lowered his head in shame before answering, "No, after I faced Voldemort to stop him from getting the sorcerer's stone in my first year I asked Dumbledore, but he said that I was too young and that he would tell me when the time was right."

"That meddling old fool," James said coldly with fire dancing in his eyes. "We always did put too much trust in the old man. Granted, his intentions are honorable, even if his actions and methods aren't. He has lived too long and no longer focuses on the individuals. Dumbledore only sees the bigger picture now, the 'Greater Good' as he calls it. He sees people as pawns to manipulate to fit the bigger picture, instead of individuals and equals to work with in order to accomplish his goals. We have stood by your side your whole life and watched as he shaped you into the weapon he'd hope you'd become. You see, Albus Dumbledore is a master of half truths and manipulations. He tends to only give out the information which is necessary, and let you work out the rest on your own. Never be ashamed that you don't know what Dumbledore should have told you long ago. It's not your fault. Let the blame rest where it belongs."

Harry shook his head as he considered his father's words. True, Dumbledore always seemed to know everything that was going on,

but he always let Harry, Hermione, and Ron onto just enough for them to complete their tasks. 'Was it all tests? Look at the sorcerer's stone. There is no way that the old man could have missed Voldemort sticking out the back of Quirrell's head. To top it off, why didn't Dumbledore just keep the stone warded in his office? He could have easily put it under the fidelius, but instead he chose to guard it with traps that even a trio of first years easily passed. What about the Chamber of Secrets? There weren't that many magical creatures in the world that could petrify a witch or wizard. That took enormous power, not considering the fact that the headmaster knew full well that Moaning Myrtle had died the first time the chamber was opened. What kind of creature had that kind of power? What kind of monster could it be deduced that the heir of Salazar Slytherin, famously called serpent-tongue, alone would be able to control? Dumbledore was hailed by many as brilliant, so surely he couldn't have missed what a second year was able to figure out. After all, he had fifty years to figure out everything about the chamber and the monster within before Hermione came along. But, yet again, the golden trio, as we are called, figured it out on our own, and miraculously, just when I needed help the most, Fawkes appeared. That couldn't be coincidence could it? After all, phoenixes could flash anywhere they wanted to, but how had it known where to find me? What about when Hermione and I saved Sirius? Dumbledore obviously knew what Hermione and I were going to do when he said that if all went well, more than one life would be saved. Dumbledore always seemed to know far more than he let on, he merely helped me along the path.'

The mysterious wizard, who seemed to have disappeared before, walked forward and spoke softly to Lily. "We don't have much time, he must choose whether to see his destiny to the end or not. We must tell him his legacy."

Lily nodded at this, "Harry, before you can understand, you do know that Voldemort is the heir of Slytherin, right?"

'What could that have to do with anything' Harry thought before giving a positive reply. "Yes, Voldemort's name is Tom Marvolo Riddle. He is the heir of Slytherin. It's because of him that I'm a parselmouth. Dumbledore said that Voldemort transferred some of his powers to me the night he tried to kill me, when the killing curse rebounded on him."

James' face darkened. "I see that the old man has indeed been feeding you little bits of information at a time, when he has deemed you ready. Sounds like him. Well first things first. When Voldemort's body was destroyed and his powers transferred to you, a small part of his soul attached to you also. That made you what is called a horcrux. A horcrux is an object that holds a piece of the soul of the wizard that made it. It anchors them to life, making them as close to immortal as most believe it is possible to be. As long as one horcrux exists, they can not pass beyond the veil because a piece of their soul is still anchored to the mortal realm. When Voldemort took your blood tonight, he took a piece of you into him. He is not exactly a horcrux, but at this moment he anchors you to life. When that final killing curse struck you, Harry, that piece of Voldemort's soul was destroyed. Still, on that fateful Halloween night, when his curse rebounded on him, Voldemort gave you powers, and a future brighter than anything ever before. He fulfilled one prophecy that night, while partially fulfilling another. He made you the magical heir of Slytherin. It is not a widely known fact, but Godric Gryffindor and Rowena Ravenclaw were wed shortly after Salazar Slytherin left the school. Being my son, you are the heir of both the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw houses since they are your direct ancestors."

Harry's jaw dropped at this. "Is that even possible? They lived so long ago; nobody knows who their descendents are." Harry took in the solemn expressions of his parents and the wizard before his eyes widened and he was slack jawed at the new knowledge.

"Don't faint just yet sweetie, there's more," Lily laughed mirthfully, laughter dancing in her blazing green eyes.

"What more could there possibly be?" Harry replied in awe.

Lily regarded her son carefully before she answered, "Well, before she died, Helga Hufflepuff cast a powerful spell on her bloodline, so that none of her descendents would be born with magical blood until the time came to fulfill the Founder's Prophecy. Most people considered me a muggleborn, with every reason, all of my ancestors going back to, but except Helga herself were born muggles. Harry you are the heir of all four of the Founders."

That was just too much as Harry stared blankly at his mother before his eyes promptly rolled back in his head and he fell back on the ground, fainting on the spot.

James could barely contain himself as he rolled in laughter. "I think you killed him dear. I told you that he would take it like that. Harry never wanted his fame in the first place and now you tell him that he's the heir of the Founders themselves." There were tears of laughter streaking down his cheeks as he tried to calm himself. "Just think, that's not even half of the news. I thought we were supposed to break it to him easily?"

Lily glared at her husband, who was just managing to regain control, obviously disapproving of him laughing at what was not, in her opinion, a laughing matter. Harry might not know it yet, but there was far too much at stake.

"Mum, what did you mean the Founder's Prophecy? And what prophecies were you talking about dad, that Voldemort fulfilled the night he killed you both," Harry said as he had come to, standing back up before he leaned against the fountain.

His parents looked at each other, coming to a silent agreement before his mother spoke. "First, Harry, the reason Voldemort came after us and tried to kill you as a baby because of a prophecy that was made shortly before your birth. Turn around and look into the water."

Harry turned as Lily waved her hand, causing the water to begin to ripple out from the center, before a glowing scene, like that of a Pensieve shown before them.

Harry watched as a slightly younger looking Dumbledore was about to get up from sitting across from a younger Sybill Trelawney before she reached across and grabbed Dumbledore's hand. Trelawney looked as if she was about to have a stroke as her body went rigid and her eyes glazed over and rolled back in her head before she spoke in a rigid voice.

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches..."

Harry sat, stunned at what he had just seen. "Does this mean...", He trailed off while looking at the sad looks on his parents faces before his father spoke up.

"Harry, that prophecy was made to Dumbledore by Sybill Trelawney while he was giving her an interview for the post of Divination teacher at Hogwarts. It foretold the coming of a boy who would have the power to vanquish Lord Voldemort. As you can see Dumbledore was quite disappointed at the performance she gave during the interview, and was about to leave when she went into a trance and made the prophecy. Severus Snape, who was working for Voldemort at the time, was caught eavesdropping on Trelawney and Dumbledore about halfway through the prophecy by the owner of the Hog's Head, which was Dumbledore's brother Aberforth, and was subsequently thrown out of the pub. Snape then returned to Voldemort to tell him what he had heard. Now remember, since Snape was apprehended before the full prophecy could be made; only part of the prophecy was reported to Voldemort. Ironically enough, the prophecy could have referred to two people who would be born at the end of July. Harry, these two people were you and a boy by the name of Neville Longbottom."

Harry spoke up at this, "Hey! I go to school with Neville. He's an alright bloke, but he has some issues with his self confidence. It's really the only thing holding him back. How can you be sure that the prophecy meant me and not Neville?"

James looked at his son sadly, "I'm afraid that it is you, Harry. Although the prophecy could have referred to both you and Neville, Voldemort decided that it was you who posed the greatest threat to him and when he tried to kill you he "marked you as his equal."

Harry's hand flew to his scar before James continued; knowing that there was no way that he wasn't the child in the prophecy. He felt doomed. All his life all he wanted to be was normal, he would happily give up all his fame and every galleon to his name to be normal and have his parents back.

James continued, knowing that there was not much time before his son had to make a decision. "Shocked by Voldemort's decision, Snape rushed to Dumbledore and explained that Voldemort had come to the conclusion that you were his to-be vanquisher, and had

vowed to kill you. Snape also confessed his longtime love for your mother, another reason he hates you so much, besides being my son, the son of his sworn enemy. Snape offered Dumbledore his loyalty in exchange for her protection. All of us here know how that turned out. There is only one known record of the prophecy. It has been kept in the Hall of Prophecy in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry of Magic ever since it was recorded."

Harry growled, "If Dumbledore knew the prophecy all along, then why hasn't he told me yet? I deserve to know why Voldemort wants to kill me. He should have told me why I don't have you guys anymore. It's my life, not his! I have every right to make the decisions for myself!" Harry's eyes began to glow a bright emerald green and his hair began levitating as his aura began to physically manifest itself. Bolt of raw magic cackled from his fingertips and ran along his skin, all over his body, while periodically bursting forth out of control, leaving craters in the field wherever it struck.

Lily reached out to her son and put a hand on his shoulder, trying to comfort him. "Sweetheart, calm down," she said.

"What does any of that have to do with the Founder's Prophecy anyways?" Harry asked his mother, staring into his mother's eyes pleading for the answers he sought.

As Harry's eyes bore into Lily's she could feel the power in him. The power that would change the wizarding world forever. However, it was wild and uncontrolled, and if Harry made the choice that she knew his heart would tell him to, he would learn to control it, and wield it before being sent back to undo everything that had been done. Finally she answered her son's question, "Everything. Without Voldemort marking you and making you the magical heir of Slytherin, it would have been impossible for the Founder's Prophecy to be fulfilled."

"Why?" Harry asked, looking at his mother in confusion.

The strange wizard placed his hand on Harry's arm, "Maybe I should answer that question. After all, I was the one who made the prophecy."

The wizard leaned on his staff and chuckled as Harry looked at him in wonder.

"The tale begins long ago, when the ancients left the mortal world. One of these, named Myrrdhin Emrys, or Merlin Ambrosius, chose to give up his divinity and became mortal in order to bring magic into the world. Before this, witches and wizard did not exist, because the power of magic was wielded only by the ancients. Though he lived here on Avalon, before it disappeared into the mists, lost to mortals forever, he created the great Stonehenge as foci for the entire world's magic, in order to maintain a balance so that magic would not go wild and destroy the world. Here, after ten thousand years, he felt that his time was drawing to a close and trained the four greatest witches and wizards of the time, before his divinity fully fled him. These four apprentices of the great Merlin ended up founding the best school for magical children that the world has ever seen, each giving their name to one of its four houses. It was called Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

Harry couldn't believe his ears. "The founders were Merlin's apprentices!" he yelled excitedly.

The wizard again chuckled at the look on Harry's face. "You really should see yourself. The look on your face is priceless. I haven't seen a look like that in over a thousand years. Yes, they were. After a period of time, Merlin decided that the wizarding world was no longer in any need of his guidance and he left Hogwarts, leaving the Founder's Prophecy behind before disappearing forever, along with the isle of Avalon, the last of the immortal lands of the ancients. The prophecy went like this," he said as he waved his hand towards the water.

Harry watched as an old wizard that he assumed to be Merlin sat in the middle of Stonehenge before waving a very familiar staff causing a circle of fire to surround him. Awestruck, Harry turned and looked at the wizard standing beside him. "Are you...?" He asked.

"Yes child, I am Merlin, keep watching," Merlin answered.

As Harry turned and kept watching, he saw the circle of fire turn into a blazing vortex of magical blue fire and thunderclouds covered the skies as lightning began rolling in the clouds and striking the great stones, which made up the circle, causing them to glow bright with power. Suddenly, a great specter appeared and spoke in a frigid voice.

"As the second war approaches, the balance is broken...the heir of magic arises...born of the blood of the four... from the ashes of death, returns the warrior... Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Slytherin, and Hufflepuff...apprentices of the ancient... bound by blood, bound by magic, they shall give rise to the heir of their master."

"I understand it now. By cheating death and being resurrected, Voldemort broke the fragile balance of life and death. He broke the balance of magic that had been held in check for so long. When he tried to kill me, I was already the heir of three of the founders. But, when he tried to kill me, unknowingly making me the magical heir of Slytherin, he made the prophecy come true, since I am able to fulfill it. What I don't get though is the part where it says 'from the ashes of death, returns the warrior...' What does it mean?"

"It means something that has not happened yet," Lily said, looking at her son apprehensively. "If you decide to go back, then technically you will be returning from death, even though you will be sent back to a time before you found out you were a wizard. Also, if you choose to return, we will train you in several different branches of magic in order for you to learn to control the massive amount of power that you wield."

"What branches of magic will I be learning?" Harry asked, anxious at the chance to learn.

Merlin smiled and said, "It is good to see that you are eager, for your training will not be easy. First off you will be learning mind magics such as legilimency, occlumency, telepathy, and telekinesis. You will also be taught advanced transfiguration, spell crafting, potions, charms, elemental and combat magics, arithmancy, astrology, and divination. Then, you will be taught many rituals, blood magic and dark magic that should only be used as a last resort. The last things you will learn will be advanced curse breaking, warding, wandcrafting, swordsmanship, and stave crafting."

Harry was speechless. "H-How long w-will it take?" he finally managed to stutter out.

Lily looked at her son proudly, "Are you sure that you are ready for this? Time means nothing here. We will spend approximately seven years training you, but it won't be easy."

"Yea, I'm ready. If I'm going to be sent back to fix things, then I will need all the training I need," Harry said firmly, knowing that this would be his only chance he got.

"Very well, then let us begin," Merlin spoke firmly with power in his voice as he struck his staff in the ground. A great earthquake shook the isle and Harry watched as what appeared to be a veil fell away and revealed a circle of stones.

"Welcome to the true Stonehenge, Harry."

Author's Note:

This is my first attempt at a Harry Potter story, and my first story period on this site. It ran a little longer than I planned, but the stage is set. I hope you all enjoyed this and I would love to here any feedback. Just to make things clear, this will be a Harry Potter harem story. I don't really like Dumbledore bashing much, so I'll keep the characters in form as much as possible. Harry will be super powerful, and will obviously have a major influence to change the wizarding world for the better because of his heritage.

Chapter 2: Surprises in Diagon Alley

Shack Out At Sea, Unknown

Harry woke up and found himself shivering, and he heard thunder outside. He looked around and remembered that his uncle Vernon had rented out the shack they were in to hide from Hagrid. 'I have to be careful. I can't let on how much I know. Dangerous things have happened to wizards that meddled with time.' Harry thought to himself, as he decided not to cast a wandless warming charm on himself, instead opting to wrap an old, moldy blanket around himself.

Harry thought back to his training, even though it technically never happened, seeing as he was in between, he still maintained all the knowledge and skills he had gained during those harsh seven years of training. Before it was all over, he had surpassed both his parents' and even Merlin's wildest expectations, and since they had an extra year and a half, he was taught to develop his metamorphmagus skills that they had discovered, along with becoming an animagi.

Harry looked at his watch as he came out of his daydream. He sighed to himself; he would be eleven in about a minute. 'Happy birthday Harry' he thought, as he drew a cake in the dirt, waiting for Hagrid's imminent arrival.

"3...2...1..." Harry counted down.

Boom! Dudley jerked awake, looking around in shock as Hagrid knocked on the door to the shack. Boom! At the second knock, Dudley bolted toward aunt Petunia, who was cowering beyond Vernon. Boom! Finally, the door gave way and flew off its hinges, slamming into the wall across the room.

"I'm warning you, you're breaking and entering," uncle Vernon said, sounding a lot braver than he looked. If one paid any attention, they could see the pee running down his uncle's leg as Hagrid stepped forward and ripped the gun out of Vernon's hands before bending it like a pretzel.

'This is priceless' thought Harry as he stood to face the first friend he had in the wizarding world.

"Budge up Dursley, ye great prune," Hagrid said as he looked down at Harry. "An 'Ere's 'Arry! Ya were just a baby las' time I saw ya. Happy birthday to ya. I got something ere for ya, mighta sat on it at one point."

Harry watched as Hagrid started pulling sausages, a kettle, and other things out of his pocket before he finally got to his cake.

Hagrid noticed Dudley starting to move closer at the site of the cake.

"Don't eat anything he gives you, Dudley!" Vernon yelled from his place in the corner.

"Don't worry Dursley, your son don't need any more fattening up. It's a shame what you've done to that poor boy, I've seen dragons smaller than he is," Hagrid chuckled at the thought.

Harry smiled as he waved his hand at the fireplace, causing flames to erupt, and Dudley's jaw to drop as he pointed at Harry.

"W-What did you just do?" He managed to stutter out, looking horror struck.

Hagrid looked at Harry for a moment and answered before Harry could, "Its called magic. Young Harry ere's a wizard, an' a thumpin' good one at that. Harry that was wandless magic. How long have you been able to do that? It usually takes years o' training till a wizard is able to control yer magic to that point."

"That? I've been able to do that for ages. I always knew I could do special things, but I was always beat and starved for days when my aunt and uncle caught me," Harry answered smiling cruelly at the Dursley's. He was immensely enjoying taunting them, after all, they had treated him like rubbish all his life.

"What!," Hagrid roared, turning to face Vernon, who's face was fast turning from red to purple in rage. "Dursley, you been beatin on James an' Lily's boy? That's suicide, it is. Do you want every witch an' wizard cross the country after yer blood?"

Vernon stepped up to Hagrid, who was easily twice his size, even with as wide as Vernon was. "We swore when we took him in that

we'd stamp that nonsense out of him. Wizard indeed. That kind of freakishness is nothing a good beating wouldn't cure."

"We swore that we wouldn't allow any of that nonsense in our house that night I found you with that letter from Dumbledore," Petunia said as she stood next to her husband, glaring hatefully at Harry, as if everything that had gone wrong in the last ten years was his fault.

Harry glared right back at her and faked a confused look as he yelled back at his aunt, "You knew!"

Petunia cackled evilly, as if she'd lost her mind, "Knew! Of course we knew! How could we not know, with me dratted sister being watch she was? Of course I'm the only one that saw her for what she was, a freak! Every summer she came home, turning rats into teacups and making the dishes was themselves. It was Lily this, Lily that. My parents were proud to have a witch in the family. Then, she decided to marry that Potter guy and when you were born we knew that you would be just the same, just as abnormal. And then, if you please, she went and got herself blown up, and we got landed with you!"

Harry watched his aunt Petunia gasping, looking relieved to have finally got that off her chest. "You told me my parent's died in a car wreck," he growled.

"Car crash!" Hagrid roared, slamming his fist against the wall, making the whole shack shake, threatening to collapse on them. "A car crash couldn't kill Lily an' James Potter. It's an outrage! A scandal! Harry Potter, not knowing his own story, when every child in our world has grown up knowing his name."

"Stop. I forbid you to tell the boy anything," Vernon screamed at Hagrid, before his courage failed again and he stumbled back at the look on Hagrid's face.

"Who are you to stop him? A great muggle like yourself stop Harry Potter from goin' to Hogwarts? Yer mad. You'd all be dead by noon," said Hagrid, turning to Harry.

"What's Hogwarts, err... sorry I don't know your name," Harry managed to get out, keeping the confused look on his face.

A look of shock came across Hagrid's face, "Didn't they tell ya anythin'.. Bout anythin'?"

"Err... Sorry," Harry looked down, trying to fake a confused and sorrowful expression, when in reality, he was enjoying every moment of this.

"Don't be, Harry. They the one's that should be sorry. All this time, you not knowing, I was beginning to worry when you weren't getting yer letters. O, an' the name's Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of Keys and Grounds and Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry," Hagrid said, slowly turning around to face the Dursley's.

Uncle Vernon seemed to have gotten his courage back again because he glared at Hagrid and yelled, "He will go to a public school he will be thankful for it!"

"Nonsense," Hagrid replied, "He will be goin' to Hogwarts unless a great muggle like you cares to stop him, and as I said before, ye'd be mad ter try it. His name's been down to go there ever since he was born an' he'll be under the finest headmaster Hogwarts has ever seen," Hagrid's chest puffed out in pride before he said, "Albus Dumb-"

"I am not paying for some crackpot old fool to teach him bloody magic tricks!," Vernon yelled from his corner.

'Looks like uncle Vernon's stupidity got the best of him, time to earn that tail Dudley' Harry thought to himself as he fought not to snicker.

"You will not insult Albus Dumbledore.. in... front... of... me..!" Hagrid roared at Vernon, causing him to cower once more. Hagrid's umbrella went swishing through the air before it came down and point at Dudley, who was trying to sneak half the cake into his mouth, shooting a yellow light at his bum.

With a small wag of his finger, Harry completed the transfiguration, which made Hagrid look at his umbrella in shock.

Aunt Petunia rushed over to the pig that was her son. "What have you done? Oh Diddykins, mommy will fix you right up," she said, hugging the pig and sobbing. "You," she pointed at Harry. "It's all

your fault. You are no longer welcome in our home. You're no nephew of mine, you freak! Get out!"

"Come on, Harry, let's go," Hagrid said, putting a hand on Harry's shoulder after wrapping the only good blanket around him. "We'll get a room for yer in London. Now I ain't prejudiced like them purebloods, but there ain't no need to stick around here cold and miserable, being treated like that by that muggle filth. Mark my words, Petunia," Hagrid said. "I was there when Dumbledore left ya that letter. Once he hears o' this yer gonna be sorry."

Harry stepped out the door as Hagrid was raging at Petunia, but not so fast that he missed the look of terror on his aunt's face at Hagrid's last words.

Harry watched Hagrid step into the boat outside and shivered from the cold, which he could still feel from within the blanket.

"Here ya go, Harry," he said, handing Harry his coat. "Now, don't worry bout me. You keep warm. Ya don't mind if I speed things up a bit do ya?"

Harry shook his head, eager to get away from the Dursley's and out of the storm.

As they sped along towards the coast, Hagrid leaned in near Harry. "Ya don't mind not mentionin' this to anyone do ya? I ain't really supposed to use magic, not that I've got ya."

Again, Harry shook his head before asking, "Hagrid, if I do something, do you mind keeping it a secret and not telling anyone? Not even Dumbledore, not until I'm ready."

Hagrid looked skeptically at Harry before smiling, "O' course Harry. As long as it's nothin' bad.

'O this is going to be wicked. I can't wait to see the look on Hagrid's face. " Good," Harry said, "Because I'm tired of being out here in the cold."

A look of confusion crossed Hagrid's face, right before Harry touch his arm and apparated them both to the Leaky cauldron. A moment later, after they both felt as if they were being squeezed through a

tube, after two almost silent pops, they appeared in front of the barman, Tom. Harry snickered at the sight of them, because if the look of surprise on Tom's face at seeing Hagrid apparate in before he noticed Harry was funny, then the look of astonishment on Hagrid's face was downright hilarious.

Tom watched Harry, as he was rolling around on the floor laughing at the old wizard and the half giant. "Merlin's beard, Hagrid. It's Harry Potter. And if I didn't know better, I'd say he just apparated you both in here. I've never seen you apparate before, Hagrid, in all these years I've known you. I didn't know that you could."

"It's nice to meet you Mr. Potter, welcome back," Tom said as he stuck his hand out towards Harry, before Harry took his hand and shook it.

"It's nice to meet you too, sir," Harry replied as he took the barkeep's hand and shook it firmly.

Hagrid managed to compose himself, "Now, ya no I can't apparate, Tom. Young Harry 'ere wants to keep it quiet, so keep it to yerself if ya will."

"Of course, Hagrid. I assume you and Mr. Potter will be getting a couple rooms tonight?" Tom asked, while looking Harry up and down, trying to measure him up.

"O, course. We might as well stick around. After all, tomorrow I gotta take young Harry here to get his school supplies," Hagrid replied, as he patted Harry on the back, nearly knocking him forward into the counter.

Harry tapped Hagrid on the arm to get his attention, as the two men continued their conversation.

"Yea? What is it, Harry?" Hagrid asked. Stopping in the middle of what appeared to be quite an interesting tale about Hagrid chasing a dragon across the countryside on a flying motorcycle after it had taken off with a crate of dead ferrets from the front of Hagrid's hut.

"Sir, you heard what my aunt and uncle said," Harry looked up innocently as he continued, "They aren't going to pay for me to go to Hogwarts, so how am I going to get supplies?"

Hagrid chuckled to himself as he looked down at Harry, seeing himself all those years ago, remembering how difficult it all seemed at first to him. "Well, that's what Gringotts is for Harry. It's the wizard's bank, didn't think yer mum and dad would leave ya with nothing did ya? Nah, first stop tomorrow is to get yer gold. Just enuff to get yeh through the school year."

As Harry listened, he sat there thinking about the next day. He would have to make an appointment with the goblins in order to get an account summary of his vaults, along with various other information.

"Hagrid, what did my aunt mean when she said that my mum got herself blown up? How did she really die?" Harry asked, hoping that the tone of his voice was convincing enough to fool Hagrid into thinking that he really was curious.

Hagrid nearly choked on his firewhiskey at Harry's question, causing Harry to snicker. "Well, I don't know if I'm the rite one to be tellin' ya this Harry, but I guess yeh gotta know. I mean, yeh can't go into Hogwarts not knowin' why yer famous," Hagrid took another drink of his firewhiskey, looking nervous before he started to continue.

"Wait, Hagrid. You don't have to tell me, I can find out from someone else. You don't look like you really want to talk about it in the first place, and I don't want to make my first friend in this world upset with me," Harry said, reassuring Hagrid, yet carefully flattering him. Harry knew Hagrid too well, there was no way Hagrid wouldn't tell him everything he knew now.

Sure enough, Hagrid's eyes filled with tears of happiness at being called Harry's first friend. "Nah, its ok, Harry. I can already tell, yer going to grow up into a fine young man," Hagrid replied, patting Harry on the shoulder and making him wince. "Well here goes. About twenty years ago there was a wizard. He went bad, well worse than that. He was as bad as they come. Right 'bout that time he started gatherin' followers. Suppose some of em wanted a piece o' his power, cause he was getting power alrigh'. Everyone that stood up to him was murdered, even yer mum and dad. Yer mum and dad were two of the best witch and wizard I ever had the pleasure to meet, Harry. It was an honor to be their friend. As the story goes, yer parents found out that you-know-who was after em.

Nobody knows what for, but then again, nobody lives once you-know-who decided to kill em. Well, yer mom and dad went into hiding for about a year before he finally caught up to em. Killed em he did, but the strange thing is, when he tried to kill you, somethin' happened. Nobody knows what happened that night, Harry. Somethin' about you stumped him alrigh'. He hasn't been seen since, and most people think he's dead. Cadswollop in my opinion. I'd say he's just out there somewhere, bidin' his time, tryin' to figure out a way to come back."

"Hagrid, who is you-know-who? What's his name?" Harry asked slowly and deliberately, gauging Hagrid's reaction.

Hagrid's eyes glazed over, and his face went pale before he regained his composure and answered. "Blimey Harry, people are still afraid to say his name. Okay, but only this once. His name was V-V-Vold-."

"Hagrid," Harry interrupted. "Why are people afraid of his name? I mean, he's gone isn't he? What harm can a name bring? The longer people fear his name, the more power they give him. Fear the man behind the name, I'd say, not the name itself."

Hagrid stared wide eyed at Harry for a moment before he started chuckling. "Yer wise beyond yer years, Harry. An' yeh sound a lot like Dumbledore. Great man, he is. Never was afraid to call him by name either. Then again, Dumbledore is the only one you-know-who ever feared. Now what's that sayin' o' his? Ah, fear of the name, only increases fear of the thing itself. His name was V-Voldemort."

Harry secretly applauded Hagrid, who managed only to wince slightly at the name.

"Now Harry, don't go around sayin' that name. People are still afraid of it yeh see. It could bring trouble, an' we don't want that. Those were dark times, Harry. Yeh never knew who yeh could trust, didn't want to go makin' friends with strange witches and wizards. Some of his followers are bound to still be around, so people are still cautious," Hagrid said, while looking at Harry, as if expecting something.

Harry smiled up at the big oaf and said, "Don't worry Hagrid; I don't want any trouble on my first day here." 'Personally though, Hagrid, that is just one of the things I plan on changing.'

"Well, we best get going up to our rooms now, Harry," Hagrid said, while downing the last of his firewhiskey. "You'll need your rest for tomorrow. I'm gonna take yer to get yer school supplies, and there's only one place to do that. Diagon Alley."

Harry thought to himself as he quietly followed Hagrid to their rooms. Tomorrow was going to be a long day. There were several things he had to do while in Diagon Alley, in order to prepare himself for the upcoming war against Voldemort. Before he went to sleep, though, he took a quill and parchment and wrote a long overdue letter.

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Albus Dumbledore was in a good mood. The time had finally come for Harry Potter to rejoin the wizarding world. In fact, he had received an owl just a short time ago from Hagrid. Hagrid was with Harry, and would be taking him to gather his school supplies tomorrow. Yes, as he watched the boy over the years, he noticed that sadly, Harry was mistreated in a terribly inhumane way. 'Alas' he thought to himself. 'I must do what I can to help him. I know that he is going to blame me for placing him with the Dursley's, rightfully so. I just hope that Harry realizes that I had his best intentions in mind when doing so.' As Dumbledore leaned back in his chair in front of his desk, he looked over at Fawkes and said, "Only time will tell, old friend."

Just then, Dumbledore noticed two beautiful wolves sitting in his office, right in front of the door, just looking at him. One of the wolves was pure black, with a line of silver tipped fur running down the length of its back. The other was pure silver, with a line of jet black tipped fur running down the length of its back. However, besides the fact that the wolves were there in the first place, what caught his attention most was their eyes. The eyes of both wolves were a brilliant emerald green, and a fire shown behind each eye, making them seemingly even more beautiful to gaze into.

Before Dumbledore to gather his thoughts at seeing the wolves there with him, Fawkes let out a loud screech of phoenix song, just before a torrential vortex of blue and golden fire swept through his

office. Out of pure instinct alone, Dumbledore had whipped up his wand and flicked a spell to freeze the fire in place, however, nothing happened. Not only was he unharmed, although his wand had been stripped from his old fingers and was now lying atop his desk, but the fire still raged.

For the first time in decades, Albus Dumbledore was struck speechless as the fire seemed to spin and swirl into a sphere hovering in the air above his desk, before it exploded outward. Instinctively, Dumbledore raised his arm to protect himself from being blinded from the flash of fire and a brilliant light. As Dumbledore lowered his arm, his jaw dropped as his ears rang with the powerful songs of a thousand phoenixes surrounding him. The experience was beyond words, and he knew that it could only mean one thing. Keeping his eyes closed, Dumbledore sincerely wished that he was not off his rockers, like many of the students liked to say.

When he opened his eyes, Dumbledore was again struck speechless. On his desk before him was a creature of astounding power and beauty. This creature had not been seen in centuries, not only because of its rarity, but also because a creature so pure could not stand to be in a world filled with corruption. In all his one hundred and sixty years of life, Dumbledore had never hoped, not even once, that he would have the honor to be in the presence of a royal phoenix. Yet, for some odd reason, the one standing before him had deemed him worthy, and it even had a letter in its beak!

The royal phoenix had jet black plumage, tinged with a dark red, in order to highlight the brilliant gold on the tips of each feather. As the phoenix looked Dumbledore in the eyes, the old wizard noticed that like the wolves, the phoenix had brilliant emerald green eyes with a living fire behind each.

Before Dumbledore could compose himself, the phoenix jumped into the air and disappeared, with a flash of fire and a single tail feather, burning with everlasting phoenix fire, floated down to his desk, alongside the letter.

After a few minutes that actually seemed like hours to the aged headmaster, Dumbledore was finally able to contain himself enough to take a look at the letter. The parchment was sealed with an emblem of a great black shield. It had a silver sword, burning with blue and white fire, stabbing down through the middle of it and the

sword had a crown on top. On the left side of the sword, a royal phoenix spread its wings as if to fan the fire and a lion sat regally on the right side of the sword, with one paw reaching out towards it, claws extended. What fascinated Dumbledore the most though, was the basilisk at the bottom. It held the tip of the sword in its fangs, but what amazed Dumbledore the most was the fact that the basilisk was in mid transformation. Not many wizards knew that the king of snakes transformed into a royal black and green dragon, the kind of which that hadn't been seen in over a thousand years. The basilisk truly was the King of Snakes, and transformed into the Lord of Beasts, the royal drake.

Albus Dumbledore leaned back and sighed. He didn't know what to think about the phoenix that had appeared, or the seal on the letter. The motto *Veneratio quod Palma, Putus of Pectus pectoris* Forever was emblazoned on a golden banner that wrapped around the shield. 'Honor and Glory, Pure of Heart Forever. Obviously whoever sent this is from an old family, although I have never heard this particular motto before,' Dumbledore thought to himself as he cast several detection spells on the letter.

Having not found any spells of any sort on the letter, Dumbledore carefully unsealed it and began to read.

Dear Headmaster,

Long time no see! It has been ten long years since the last time you saw me, and condemned me to the miserable life that I have led up to this point. I wish I could see the look on your face right about now, that is if you realize who I am.

Right now I am sitting at a desk at the Leaky Cauldron writing this to you. Hagrid is already in the next room snoring. I don't know what you were thinking all those years ago when you placed me with the Dursley's, but rest assured that you and I will have a long talk when we next see each other. I don't appreciate people meddling in my life, and though you may have had very good reasons for what you did, and I will require an explanation, you made choices for my life that have led me to being beaten, starved, and pretty much treated like dirt.

I will expect you to answer for all of this. Depending on what you decide to tell me, and your reasons, we may be able to work

together. I will never forgive you for the hell you condemned me to go through, but there might be a chance that we can leave the past behind us and start fresh. After all, we have a war to prepare for if Voldemort ever returns. Like you, I don't believe that he is truly gone.

Meet me at the King's Cross station on September 1st. I will have something that you need to see. Make sure to bring the minister along with you.

Sincerely,

Harry James Potter

As Dumbledore finished reading the letter, he sat there with it still in his hands, contemplating the possibilities. Albus was not easily surprised, yet this was the third time in less than half an hour that he had been struck speechless. In truth, he was utterly bamboozled and apparently it was all because of a young boy, who until now, Dumbledore thought had grown up, completely oblivious to the world of magic that was kept secret, all around him.

'How does Harry know so much?' Albus pondered. 'He was supposed to remain ignorant of everything until now, so that he could grow up as a normal child, but this? What went wrong? How in Merlin's name was Harry able to get a royal phoenix of all things, to bring me a letter?'

Dumbledore went to bed that night wondering about Harry Potter. 'This will be an interesting year if Harry continues like this. He has already shown himself to be highly unpredictable.' As he thought about what had occurred in his office, just shortly before, Albus Dumbledore fell asleep with a smile on his face. After all, he had to meet the French ambassador and head auror Jean Claude Delacour at Gringotts tomorrow. If he timed things right, he would be able to run across Hagrid and Harry as they visited his vaults. Tomorrow, he would have his answers.

Delacour Mansion, France

Hundreds of miles away, in a small room, a little girl woke with a start. She found herself sweating as she sat up in bed. Lately, she had been having these strange dreams that seemed to be from a different time, and even when she was awake, she found herself

remembering things that couldn't possibly have happened. At least, not yet. The girl looked around her room, and remembered where she was. She didn't understand what was going on, but she had a feeling that it had something, if not everything to do with her veela heritage. Laying back down to sleep, she vowed to herself that the next morning, she would talk to her mama and papa about it.

Leaky Cauldron, London

Harry woke with a smile and took a shower before he went to Hagrid's room. "Come on, Hagrid, wake up! Its time to go," Harry yelled, while throwing open the blinds.

"Blimey, Harry. Yer excited ain't yeh?" Hagrid said as he slowly got up out of bed. Nevertheless, he was smiling as he remembered his first day in Diagon Alley, after he had received his own letter.

Harry followed Hagrid out to the back of the Leaky Cauldron and watched him tap a certain sequence of bricks with the tip of his umbrella, causing an archway to form the entrance.

"Welcome, Harry, to Diagon Alley," Hagrid said proudly. "Well, come on now. We're off to Gringotts, ain't no safer place to keep yer money. Gringotts is the safest place in the world fer anything yeh want ter keep safe, 'cept maybe Hogwarts. Yeh'd have to be mad ter try an' rob it. The goblins ain't nobody yeh wanna mess with, Harry, mark my words."

As Harry and Hagrid were partway down Diagon Alley, they came upon Gringotts near its intersection with Knockturn Alley. Here stood the imposing snow-white marble building: Gringotts Wizarding Bank towering over the other shops.

"Harry, this is Gringotts. This is the place where witches and wizards store their money and other valuables. The vaults here are miles below ground and are heavily guarded. Gringotts has been here fer centuries, and as I said before, it is run by goblins. Devilishly cunning, they are. They alone know the secrets of the twisting underground passages and the enchantments that are in place to defend against intruders. I once heard somewhere that there are even dragons down there. Crikey I'd like a dragon. Well, the goblins have a code that forbids them to speak of the bank's secrets, that's why no one can break it. It's protected by old goblin magic, and they

would consider it treachery to break any part of that code. Even the curse breakers have to sign magically binding contracts in order to work for them," explained Hagrid as they walked up the stairs and passed through the burnished bronze outer doors of Gringotts before they came up to the small entrance hall. As they passed near the silver doors at the end were two goblins, grinning evilly at them. Each one had a uniform of scarlet and gold and scanned them as they walked in.

After the goblins waved them on, Harry read the inscription on the front of the large silver doors as they opened, before he walked through them and into the main lobby of the bank.

Enter, stranger, but take heed
Of what awaits the sin of greed,
For those who take, but do not earn,
Must pay most dearly in their turn.
So if you seek beneath our floors
A treasure that was never yours,
Thief, you have been warned, beware
Of finding more than treasure there.

As they passed through the doors, again, flanked by goblins, they came into the vast marble hall that made up the main lobby. Here, by Harry's estimation, there were a hundred or more goblins were sitting at counters counting coins, gems, and other important things. Leading off the hall, Harry saw several doors through which at least one, and probably more of them, customers could access their vaults from.

Harry quickly found an open counter and walked up to it.

"State your business," the goblin said, looking at Hagrid.

"We are here to withdraw some gold for young Harry's school supplies," Hagrid said proudly, with a painful thump of his hand on Harry's shoulder. "Also, here's a letter from Dumbledore, concerning the vault you-know-what in the vault you-know-which."

"Does Mr. Potter have his key?" the goblin asked, as it peered over the counter, grinning evilly at Harry.

"Yea, I got it. Hold on," Hagrid said as he dug through his pockets, before finally pulling out a small golden key and handing it to the goblin.

"Very well, I will have a goblin take you to both vaults. Griphook!" the goblin called. Soon, another goblin came wobbling up towards them.

"Follow me please," Griphook said before turning and opening a door to guide them through it.

"Hagrid, would it be alright if you got my gold for me? I have some business I need to attend to some personal business here," Harry asked, hoping that Hagrid would agree. He really didn't need anyone with him when he made his claims.

Hagrid turned and watched Harry, wondering what was going on before he saw Dumbledore just coming in with a Frenchman and a young French girl that looked about eight years old. "O, course, Harry. An' when yer done, yeh might want to have a chat with the headmaster. He's just over there and I reckon he came to see you," Hagrid said while pointing over at Dumbledore, before he turned and followed Griphook through the door, closing it behind him.

The goblin that he and Hagrid had spoken to before looked suspiciously at Harry as he walked back up to the counter. "What else can I do for you, Mr. Potter?" he started to ask just before Harry raised his right hand, causing a ring to appear. The goblin's eyes nearly popped out of his head as he saw the crest that was bore upon the ring, which had three emeralds, three rubies, one diamond, and several smaller, magical stones surrounding it.

Harry grinned at the goblin's reaction before he spoke in the goblin language. "Please tell director Ragnok that I would be honored if he would agree to meet with me at his earliest convenience. There are a few matters that I must go over with him."

"Of course, my lord. I believe that director Ragnok is in his office now. Would you like us to check?" the goblin said respectfully, hoping that his blunder would not cost him his job, or worse, his head.

"Yes, please. That would be greatly appreciated," Harry answered. "Also, do not worry about your job or your life. You had no way of

knowing who you were speaking to until I showed you, and I would be grateful if you would keep this to yourself."

The goblin looked practically gobsmacked at Harry's words as he practically ran through the door behind him.

"Harry, my boy. What a pleasure it is to finally meet you again," a voice called out from somewhere behind him.

Harry turned around sharply at the voice. "Hello, Headmaster," Harry said coldly. "I assume you got my letter last night?"

A look of delight crossed Dumbledore's face before he answered, "Ah, yes. I was most surprised at your words, and indeed, the method of delivery. Would you like to explain it?"

"Not at this time, Headmaster. I have several things to do today, but if you meet me at the station as requested, I will be glad to speak with you about that, among other things, then," Harry replied. "Who are your acquaintances?"

"My apologies, Harry. I did not mean to offend you. Please excuse my lack of manners also. This man with me is the French head auror, Jean Claude Delacour. He is here as an ambassador," Dumbledore's eyes twinkled as he held his hand out to a short, plump man, with a pointed black beard. Although his appearance, might not have been that impressive, he carried himself with an air of dignity and authority.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Potter," the French wizard said, with a slight accent, as he held his hand out to shake Harry's. "This beautiful, little angel beside me is my daughter Gab-"

Monsieur Delacour didn't get to finish speaking as Gabrielle looked up at Harry, just before a look of apprehension dawned on her and she launched herself on him. "Harry!" she screamed, just before he was tackled to the ground.

Before anyone could react a brilliant white wave of light and magic tore through the main lobby of Gringotts, knocking everyone to the floor. However, the surprise didn't stop there, because the light seemed to be coming from Gabrielle. As the three wizards, along

with several goblins stared in shock and awe, her body changed and aged itself to an age much closer to Harry's.

"Gabrielle, explain yourself. What just happened? Why did you tackle Mr. Potter to the ground?" Monsieur Delacour asked his youngest daughter, looking at her worriedly.

"Papa," Gabrielle started, as she sat herself up beside Harry. "He is the one I told you and mama about. He is the one from my dreams. He is my très spécial et chérir une."

Harry was confused as he looked at Gabrielle. She breathtakingly beautiful and was tall and willowy, for her age. She had an air of grace around her that made her seem like she was gliding when she walked the short distance to hug her father, before returning to Harry's side. She also seemed to emanate a faint, silvery glow, reminding Harry of her older sister Fleur. She had long, waist-length hair of silvery blonde, large, deep blue eyes, and very white, even teeth.

"My Lord, director Ragnok is ready to see you. Please follow me. I will escort you to the director," the Goblin called out to Harry as returned to the lobby.

"Harry, what is this about?" Dumbledore asked Harry, while he helped Harry to his feet.

"That is my business, Headmaster. For now, I must go," Harry growled before holding his hand out to Gabrielle. "Would you like to come with me? Your father and Dumbledore can conclude their business alone, and I promise that you will be quite safe with me."

"Now, see here young man. Just because I had expected this sooner or later, doesn't mean that I'm okay with it," Monsieur Delacour said firmly, as he tried to step between Harry and Gabrielle.

"Papa," Gabrielle said without even a hint of an accent as she gripped Harry's hand harder. "We will talk about this later. But for now, I must go with Harry to this meeting. Please, Papa."

As he looked at the pleading look in his daughter's eyes, Monsieur Delacour sighed. "Of course, my angel. I just didn't think it would be this soon. Mr. Dumbledore and I will await you both here in the lobby.

"O, thank you, Papa!" Gabrielle smiled dazzlingly as she hugged her father tightly, before taking Harry's hand and following the goblin through the door, still smiling happily.

Soon, they came to large ornate golden doors and the goblin rapped on one of the doors with his hand.

"Director Ragnok, Harry Potter wishes to see you," the goblin said.

"Send him in," a raspy voice sounded from inside.

Harry looked around as they walked in. They were in a large, circular room that nearly screamed wealth. The architecture was ancient, antique yew and blackwood, inlaid with gold and mythril. The furniture was made from yew, except for the large, golden throne behind the desk that a regal looking goblin sat at.

"Hello Director Ragnok, may many fortunes smile upon you." Harry greeted in the goblin tongue.

Ragnok nearly fell off the throne from shock. Not only did the boy speak their language perfectly, he also spoke with manners.

"What is it young Lord Potter?" the goblin asked in English. "How can I be of service to you today and who is this young veela that is with you? It is not often that we goblins see a human treat other magical creatures as equals."

"Please call me Harry. I wish to do a blood purity test. I would like to know of my lineage, and lay claim to any and all of my vaults. Also, I have heard that goblins are able to determine which, if any, special abilities that a witch or wizard may possess," Harry replied, while bowing respectfully to Ragnok and helping Gabrielle to her seat, before taking his own.

"Indeed, all that is quite possible, Harry. Also, due to the report that Ripclaw gave me, I was going to request that you take both of these tests anyways, in order to verify your identity. This will all be at the expense of Gringotts, of course. We would not want to allow anyone, other than the rightful wizard to lay claim to such an ancient bloodline vault," Ragnok stated.

'If this boy truly is the heir, then we are in for some interesting times ahead of us. At least he seems to treat non humans with respect as equals. There is promise in this child. Let us hope that he is the one. He may finally be able to put these dark years behind us forever.'

Ragnok thought to himself as he gathered the required papers for the two rituals.

"Harry, I can sense the old magic that is strong within you, but before I can say more, you must both follow me to our genealogy ritual chamber, where we can perform the two rituals that are necessary," Ragnok said through grinning teeth as he stepped down from his throne and opened an ancient looking door that had appeared from nowhere in the side of the room.

When they came to the room, Harry looked around and saw that the walls were covered in names of all the wizard families that had ever been recorded to have a vault at Gringotts. Also, a curious look passed over his face at the sight of what appeared to be a large aquarium that was cylindrical in shape, and it appeared to have a clear potion inside.

"This is our genealogy chamber. The liquid in that aquarium will be activated by the magic within you and it will light up names on these walls, depending on if you are the direct heir, or magical heir of the families," Ragnok explained as he led them into the room. "This will be quite an uncomfortable experience for you, since the ritual requires you to completely submit and allow your magic to control you and search you. Rest assured, you will be completely safe, however."

Harry looked at Ragnok cautiously, trying to determine if he was telling the truth or not. He could easily use legilimency, but he did not want to offend the goblins, especially when their cooperation was crucial. Finally, he asked, "What do I have to do?"

Ragnok grinned cruelly at Harry and answered, "You will have to be completely submerged in the potion until it takes effect on you, and then we will pull you out. During the period of time that it will take for the ancient magic in the room to work its course, you will use this ceremonial knife to cut your palm and drip some of your blood into this basin" As Ragnok said this, he waved his hand towards an ancient looking bowl that was covered in runes. It was sitting beside

a silver ceremonial knife, along with a blank piece of parchment and a quill.

"As soon as the basin has enough blood, your hand will automatically heal itself, and you will use that quill, dipped in your blood, and sign your name on the parchment. The charms on that parchment, along with the magic in the runes that cover the basin, will show you any and all special abilities that you have, whether or not they have been discovered yet," Ragnok explained.

Gabrielle looked quizzically at Ragnok. She had been quiet up to this point as she felt a bit overwhelmed by the magic she felt in this room. She sensed the old and powerful magic that was gently stirring and could be roused easily if one knew what they were doing. "What about me, Director? Would I be able to perform these rituals also?"

Ragnok glanced briefly at Gabrielle before bowing his head, "I'm afraid not Miss Delacour. The veela blood in you would make the ritual disastrous for you, possibly killing you. Though blood magic and sex magic work well together in most cases, this is not one of those. In order for the ritual to work, the magic must completely overwhelm the witch or wizard and I'm afraid that if you were to go through it, the blood magic and your magic would likely collide against each other, since both brands of magic have dominant traits."

"That's okay Gabrielle," Harry said as he softly squeezed her hand, seeing her face downcast and trying to comfort her.

"I guess so," she replied.

"So, can we do this now, Ragnok?" Harry asked the old goblin.

Grinning, Ragnok answered, "Of course, Lord Potter. If young Miss Delacour would stay right here, we can get you situated and begin the rituals.

"Will you be ok, Gabrielle?" Harry asked softly as he looked her in the eye.

Gabrielle looked up shyly and said, "Yes, I will be fine *chérir une*. Let us get this over with. We still have to deal with my father."

At that remark, Harry gulped, causing Gabrielle to giggle. The sound of her giggling was music to Harry's ears as it made him imagine sitting on the edge of a beach, watching the sunset, listening to the music the Gabrielle's voice spoke straight to his heart.

Snapping out of it, Harry stepped forward, slowly releasing Gabrielle's hand and said, "I'm ready. Let's do this."

As Harry climbed the stair to the top of the aquarium, he wondered what it would feel like. Even Merlin did not tell him anything of these rituals. When Harry got to the top, two goblins lowered him into the aquarium.

Just as the tip of Harry's head submerged completely under the water, he felt like he was being suffocated. Try as he might, Harry could not move. His limbs simply refused to respond. Finally, running out of air, Harry began to panic and his body began to thrash around. To Harry, it felt like jagged wires were stabbing all over him and the pain was excruciating. Just when Harry was about to give up, however, his body seized and went rigid, and his magic exploded outward from him in massive waves.

Gabrielle was getting worried. First it had seemed that Harry had stop moving, but that was at least better than when he started thrashing about for a few minutes, looking like he was in mortal agony. Just when she was about to tell Ragnok to stop the ritual, Gabrielle's eyes shot back towards Harry as she felt a massive wave of power fill the room. She could barely stand looking at the aquarium, the bright was so light. After a few minutes, though, the light began to dim, but was still pulsing strongly throughout the room as the goblins pulled a glowing Harry out of the now golden and pulsing liquid.

Harry barely realized it when the goblins pulled him from the liquid. Believe it or not, he felt great! It was a horrible experience, but now he felt better than he ever had before. When he got to the bottom of the stair and began walking over to Gabrielle, she ran over to him and launched herself into his arms.

"Are you alright chérir une? I was so worried," She said, looking worried at Harry before burying her head in his chest. "You looked like you were in so much pain!"

Harry patted Gabrielle's head as he held her close. "I'm fine and yes it hurt like hell but I feel great now."

"Are you sure?" Gabrielle asked, looking up at Harry with tears in her eyes. "I can't lose you now. Especially right after I finally got you. It seems a bit strange to me still, but I do remember you saving my life at the triwizard tournament. The foolish headmaster put me in that lake, knowing that the veela are still at war with the merpeople. He was a fool to believe that they would keep the granddaughter of the veela Matriarch safe. It was the perfect opportunity for them to ransom me and win the war."

This time, it was Harry's turn to be surprised, as he openly gaped at Gabrielle. "H-How'd you-," he managed to stutter out, causing Gabrielle to giggle again.

"I don't know," she answered. "My mama should be able to explain it to us, though. Before we can do that, you need to finish the other ritual."

Harry smiled at Gabrielle and nodded. It was true, he needed to finish so he could complete what he came here to do. He also had to talk with Gabrielle's father, and even though he didn't really want to speak with Dumbledore yet, Harry knew that the old man would not let him go until he had at least some answers.

Sighing, Harry stepped up to the table beside Ragnok, on which the basin and other materials for the second ritual sat, and picked up the dagger before cleanly slicing his palm and filling the basin with blood. Just as Ragnok had promised, after a couple seconds, his hand began to heal perfectly, not even leaving a scar. Next, Harry took the quill, and dipping it into the blood, he signed his name to the top of the parchment.

The second the quill picked up from the parchment after signing the last letter of Harry's name, golden lines began crawling all over the parchment and lighting up several words that Harry was sure weren't there before. Harry also noticed that several names began to glow on the wall, some in gold, and a couple in silver. Ragnok took the parchment from Harry's hands, along with a parchment of the names that had glowed on the wall before frowning.

"Interesting. Your results are spectacular, Lord Potter, but there was one problem. When I witnessed your reaction to the first ritual, especially the ending, it had me worried. By the looks of things, there was no need. If you would both follow me back to my office, we can continue our business there and I will answer all of your relevant questions," Ragnok said before he walked off, heading back towards his office.

Looking at each other, Harry and Gabrielle sighed before taking each other's hands and following him. Whatever the results were, Ragnok's last comment had them both worried, but if they stood by each other, they knew that they could get through it together. As for Harry, personally, he didn't understand what was going on between him and Gabrielle yet, but he liked it. And he definitely wasn't fixing to look this gift hippogriff in the beak.

Author's Notes:

For those of you who do not understand French, *très spécial et chérir une* means most loved and cherished one. The significance of this phrase will be explained in the next chapter by Gabrielle's mother. Also, the results are in! I know I'm evil to make you all wait. I can't wait to see what Harry can do. If anyone has any ideas of what special abilities they want Harry to have, let me know. I will consider all the requests, but obviously I may or may not put it into the story. Votes please!

For those of you who have noticed that I put Gabrielle with Harry in the summary, and not Fleur, kudos to you. The reason I am going to do it this way is because as Fleur is already several years older than Harry, her personal issues when it comes to men being able to resist her Veela powers area bit difficult to go around. It is also more difficult for an older witch, especially a veela, in a pureblood society to go after a younger wizard than it would be the other way around.

Another thing that makes Gabrielle more realistic and fun is that she still owes Harry a life-debt from the previous timeline. It'll be funner this way seeing as it will be simpler to explain her being with Harry, then Fleur. Personally, I think Fleur is a bit stuck up, even though Bill makes her ease up a bit. As for Tonks. She's a no brainer. I've already got an idea of how to stick her fun loving, kinky self in there.

Again, thanks for all your reviews.

Chapter 3: Results and Veela Bonds

Main Lobby, Gringotts, London

Having finished their business, Dumbledore and Jean Delacour awaited the return of the children, each being buried in their own thoughts that circled around the young, disheveled Harry Potter.

For Jean Delacour, the matter was a bit more personal. After all, his little angel's heart was at stake. He knew that, unfortunately, after the long, emotional talk with his wife and youngest daughter earlier that morning, there was no way to break the bond that had been formed between his Gabby and young Mr. Potter.

'Wait a minute. Didn't the goblin refer to him as Lord Potter? What was that all about? It was unlikely, but not unheard of, that an underage wizard would be the Head of House.' Getting back on subject, Jean remembered that there was a way to break the bond, but he could not put Gabrielle through that to Appoline, if they attempted to break the bond, it would cause his little angel unbearable pain from losing her soul mate. If worst came to worst, it could kill her, but it would at the very least strip her of her magic, and possibly her sanity. Grimacing at the thought, Jean decided to do his best to remain civil to the boy. After all, no father would want the alternative for his daughter, and this couldn't be Lord Potter's fault, could it?

Sighing to himself, Jean Delacour tried to keep his doubts to himself. He would definitely have to get to the bottom of this. He had to get to know this child. After all, the child was famous and the Heir of at least one of the Ancient and Most Noble families. Harry Potter held great potential, both financially and politically. Even more, Jean could feel the power that was restrained within the young wizard. But how could he be sure that Harry would treat his Gabby right? For centuries, wizards had enslaved veela for their beauty and charms. Corruption was rampant in the UK, and it was no secret that it was the last place you wanted to be if you were a part-human. For Harry's sake, Jean hoped that he was an honorable young man. Smiling, Jean realized the way Harry treated the goblins. Harry treated them with far more respect than many wizards did these days.

Albus Dumbledore was confused. After the scene earlier, where Monsieur Delacour's daughter had launched herself on Harry, and then allowed her to go off with him to a meeting with the goblin director Ragnok, of all creatures, the old headmaster was stunned. The French auror seemed oddly at ease with his youngest daughter's actions and even seemed a bit unsurprised. This confused Albus to no end. Who in their right mind would react that way after their daughter aged several years in the span of less than thirty seconds? Yet, while carefully gauging the Frenchman's facial expressions and his reactions, Albus determined that somehow, the French auror had expected it.

'My old age must really be getting to me.' Dumbledore thought to himself as he stared speechless at the French ambassador when he pretty much admitted as much, save for the fact that he hadn't expected it to be so soon. Dumbledore frowned. The waters of young Harry's life seemed to only grow murkier. Albus needed some answers, soon.

Worried as he was, Albus also did not miss the reactions between the goblins and Harry. The goblin that had taken the two children to the meeting had called Harry, Lord Potter. That was impossible. Harry was underage, and Albus himself had made sure that James' and Lily's will would not be read until Harry's seventeenth birthday. Harry simply was not ready to take the responsibilities that came with being a Head of House. Harry deserved at least a few more years to grow up and have a normal childhood.

"Eet 'as been a while since zey left us, Dumbledore," Monsieur Delacour said, breaking the silence between the two men.

"Indeed it has, Jean. Perhaps you would like to join me for a drink? We can await them at the leaky cauldron and Hagrid will bring them to us when they return."

"Zat would be acceptable, Dumbledore. Eet would also give me a chance to contact my wife, Apolline. She understands much more of what Gabrielle is going through zan I do. Eet will benefit zem both to listen to what she has to say," Jean replied.

"Fantastic, I will inform Hagrid to purchase Harry's school supplies for him, and he can return for his robes and wand tomorrow," Dumbledore said excitedly. This would give him the perfect chance

to speak with young Harry, and also find out what was going on between the young wizard and Gabrielle.

"Then let us go, Dumbledore. I could use a drink. It will help the headache that is bound to come in a short while, after they return to us," Jean said as the two wizards quickly exited the bank.

"Yes, I daresay that I too am looking forward to that conversation," Dumbledore replied softly, chuckling as he went to find Hagrid. 'Your headache has only just begun, old friend. Things are happening way to fast, and I must regain control of this situation, for Harry's own good.

Director's Office, Gringotts, London

Sitting down behind his desk, Ragnok motioned for a goblin outside the office to close the door. The moment the door closed, Ragnok waved his hand and the walls and doors of the office glowed blue, sealing it effectively.

Ragnok's actions were making both Harry and Gabrielle curious and they watched Ragnok intently. The looks on their faces made it loud and clear. They were all ears, and they wanted to know exactly what was going on.

"First off," Ragnok began, do either of you have any questions?

Harry and Gabrielle glanced at each other, coming to a silent agreement, before Harry nodded and asked, "Ragnok, what did you mean exactly when you said there was a problem with the first ritual?"

"Ah yes, I thought you might ask about that. Before I can begin to explain it to you, I have a question of my own. Have you ever had any problems controlling your magic? I am speaking of physical magic, such as charms and transfiguration, which require the use of a wand or another magical focus?" Ragnok watched both Harry and Gabrielle closely for any reaction to the question. However, neither one showed any. Instead, they looked more confused.

"Ragnok, we are both eleven, and we don't even own wands yet. I am sorry that I can't answer your question either way," replied Harry.

"No matter, Harry." Ragnok said, trying to figure out an easy way to break the news to Harry. 'Well, if I am blunt, at least the child will understand.' "Harry, during the ritual, your magic was forced to purge any outside or impure influences on you. During this process, the residue of powerful dark magic was found. The strange thing is, it was determined that the cause of this was that the soul of another wizard that, torn and battered, had once been bound to you. Do you know anything of this?"

Harry sighed. He'd been found out. He had wanted to keep that a secret for as long as possible. It was a good thing that Ragnok had sealed the office, because what he was about to say, he did not want to get out and be made public knowledge. People might think that he would turn dark because of it. "When Voldemort tried to kill me as a baby, he unknowingly made me a horcrux. It anchored him to this life, and now he lives as a shade."

Although he had been expecting as much, Ragnok's eyes still widened and he looked at the young Lord Potter thoughtfully before answering. "I expected as much, although I am quite surprised that you already knew about it. It appears that somehow the soul fragment from the wizard christening himself as Lord Voldemort, is no longer bound to you. If it was, the magical backlash caused by the ritual purging your magic clean would have killed you. What did occur was that there was still residual dark magic, which was strangling and binding your magical core. On that note, you already appeared to have a fusion of two powerful magical cores, both having your magical signature. One of these was your normal one, while the other appeared to be fully matured, having well toned magical channels overlying your normal ones throughout your body."

Harry sat thoughtfully, at first not noticing the pause in Ragnok's speech. "Does that mean I have two magical cores?"

"No, Harry," Ragnok replied. For a moment, the old goblin sat thinking to himself, choosing his next words carefully. "During the purging process, your cores had a massive chain reaction as the residual magic and binds were released. In this process, your magic began steadily increasing and decreasing in waves that quickly gained in strength began finally, a massive magical backlash occurred as your cores imploded on each other. Normally, no wizard or witch would be able to withstand the force of their magical core

imploding on itself. Usually, when this happens, the witch or wizard either dies, or loses their magic altogether."

"But I didn't lose my magic. I can still feel it flowing through me, when I stepped out of the aquarium I could feel it revitalizing me," Harry said, growing more confused by the minute.

"That is true, Harry. As they imploded, your cores simultaneously healed you and fused into a larger, immature core, with surprisingly advanced magical channels running throughout your body. I fear the pain is not over for you yet, as the process will be incomplete until you go to sleep tonight. As your body falls into unconsciousness, your mind and your magic will flare, causing your body to grow, and shape to suit the power running through your veins. This is necessary to keep you from dying from all the excess magic. I daresay that when you awake tomorrow morning, you will no longer look the same as you do now."

Harry didn't know how he should feel. He understood everything Ragnok was telling him, and told him so. But he didn't know whether to dread the long night that he was bound to have, or be elated that he had retained his full powers that had fully matured during his time in between. By now, Harry was well accustomed to pain, but it still wasn't pleasurable. "Can we continue, Ragnok? I thank you for the information. You have given me a lot to think over later," Harry murmured.

Ragnok shifted in his seat and took one of the pieces of parchment. "Of course, Lord Potter," he replied as he handed the parchment to Harry. "I can understand your need to think it over further. Now, the parchment I have handed you contains information on which houses you are the heir of. Before you begin, I would like to answer a question before it is asked, because the House of Drakul is scarcely known, and has been that way for the last eighteen hundred years or so. They were the ancestors of modern vampires, before they were cursed. Since the dormant blood of the Drakul's has finally shown itself, after all this time, in you, I believe that the vampire's curse does not apply to you. The ancient blood in you appears to be pure. This means that you will basically have all their strengths, purified and multiplied to what they were before they were cursed, and you will have none of their weaknesses. Sunlight will not be able to harm you, you will not thirst for blood, and you will eventually be

able to take the form of one of the great drakes of old. I do not know what the effects will be on your appearance, however."

Harry and Gabrielle each held a corner of the parchment, and Harry heard Gabrielle gasp as they read it together.

Harry James Potter

Age: 11

Status: Pureblood

Heir of House Drakul

Heir of House Peverell

Heir of House Potter

Heir of House Black

Heir of House Gryffindor

Heir of House Hufflepuff

Heir of House Ravenclaw

Magical Heir of House Slytherin

Last of the True Sorcerers

Magical Heir of House Emrys

While they were reading, a stack of parchments and a box appeared on the table in front of them. Before Gabrielle could take them, Ragnok shook his head. "Harry, in this box are the all the family rings that will go on your fingers before you leave here. You can choose for them to remain separate, or they will, of their own accord, bind themselves to the ring you already wear. Naturally, there will be powerful protections on each one and you alone will be able to see any of them, unless you choose to show them of your own free will. Normally, since the House of Emrys ring, which is already on your finger, is the most ancient and powerful one, it will be the one that is

normally seen, until you decide to show one of the others. Would you like to put them on now?"

Immediately, Harry nodded and reached for the box. Putting them on, one by one, they each resized themselves to fit his finger and disappeared, leaving only the Emrys ring there.

"We have also taken the liberty of gathering the financial information on all of your accounts, and with your permission we will combine all the vaults so that when you go in your main vault, you can access each of the others from it. This will also disable the front doors to all of your other vaults, seeing as there will be a door for each one leading from the main vault," Ragnok explained almost giddily. This young wizard sitting before him was easily the richest wizard in the country, possibly the world. Ragnok smiled widely, showing several rows of sharp teeth, as he thought of the profits that Gringotts would make by working with him. He'd be an elder in no time at all, and all he had to do was keep their newest customer!

"Go ahead and connect them. It will make it easier for me to visit my vaults, without having to take the cart everywhere," Harry answered.

Ragnok nodded in reply, making Harry and Gabrielle both wince at the sight of the grinning goblin. "Very well. As the Director of Gringotts, I will personally manage your finances for the Emrys vault. It has always been the duty of the Director and I will uphold my duty to the best of my abilities. However, with all of my other responsibilities, I must ask that you appoint another to manage all of your other accounts. Whichever goblin you choose, it will be that goblin's only job. That job alone will be quite a handful and, if I may, I would strongly suggest that you choose before we go over your finances so that your account manager can be here with us while we do."

Without a second thought, Harry already knew the goblin he wanted. The goblin in question was very efficient, and had a very good eye on how to turn a profit. "I would like Griphook to be my account manager."

To say he was surprised would be a major understatement. "Are you sure, Harry? Your attitude towards goblins and other creatures that most witches and wizards normally consider below them is very refreshing, let me assure you. But Griphook is only a cart goblin."

Harry merely looked up and smiled. "I am sure. Griphook has a lot of potential, and I can always change my mind later."

"That is true," Ragnok nodded affirmatively. Knocking a specific pattern on the desk in front of him, Ragnok deactivated the wards on the office and called for the goblins to bring Griphook to him.

Before long the office door opened, allowing a slightly confused looking Griphook entry. Bowing respectfully to Ragnok, he said, "You asked to see me, Director? How may I be of service?"

"You are here by Lord Potter's request, not mine. However, your fortunes run freely today, as he has requested that you become his account manager for all his accounts, save the one of Emrys, which I will look after myself. Do you accept this position?"

Griphook looked faint, with his eyes bugging out of his head and tottering as if he was going to collapse. Apparently, this was not one of the things he had ever expected to hear, at least not there and then.

As Griphook turned towards Harry, he saw a look of fierce glee and determination, backed by quite a bit of greed in his eyes. Smiling to himself, Harry could already tell that he wasn't going to regret this. Goblins are notorious for their cunning and greed, they would literally cut their own mothers down for gold and unless Harry was greatly mistaken, the more profits Griphook made for Harry, the wealthier he would be in turn.

"It would be an honor to accept these new responsibilities, Lord Potter," Griphook said excitedly.

"Call me Harry, please. I really can't stand my fame and titles," Harry replied, a little unnerved at Griphook's reaction. It wasn't easy to excite a goblin, and in Harry's opinion, they were a bit more frightening when they were.

"Of course, Lor- Harry," Griphook responded, bowing deeply to Harry before seating himself at beside Harry and taking a copy of the financial records.

Looking over the paperwork, Harry soon realized why the goblins, especially Griphook had reacted the way they did. Harry was rich, filthy, stinking, rich. Harry was quite sure that he could build several mansions out of the galleons themselves. Obviously, the interest on several of his vaults had built up a fortune over the years.

House Drakul

Vault number 230. High security.

Vault contains 78,349,293 galleons.

Vault also contains several ancient scrolls on warding and blood magic, along with many priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Castle Drakul and several smaller properties in Romania

Ollivander's 15%

Madam Malkin's 24%

Marriage contract to the House of Black for the first daughter born.

Overall value of House Drakul stands at 97,534,164 galleons.

House Peverell

Vault number 412. High security

Vault contains 4,436,213 galleons.

Vault also contains a vast supply of potions texts and materials, along with many priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Peverell Manor

Godric's Hollow 24%

Ollivander's 18%

Slug & Jiggers Apothecary 52%

Carrows Finest Cauldrons 78%

Marriage contract to the House of Su for the first daughter born.

Marriage contract to the House of Spinnet for the first daughter born.

Overall value of the House of Peverell stands at 11,362,653 galleons.

House Potter

Vault number 651. Trust fund vault 1241 closed and added to main. High security.

Vault contains 782,654,314 galleons.

Vault contains a large library containing many ancient books and scrolls on various subjects, many of them the only copies in existence. Vault also contains a vast amount of priceless gems, portraits, ward stones, and other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Potter Mansion and several other properties, scattered throughout Scotland, Ireland, and the UK.

Godric's Hollow 26%

Floreat Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour 29%

Dell 56%

Flourish & Blotts 40%

Gambol & Japes 25%

Zonko's 25%

Quality Quidditch Supplies 75%

Marriage contract for a Miss Ginevra Molly Weasley to Mr. Harry Potter, signed and dated by the fathers of both children on October 9, 1981.

Double marriage contract for a Miss Padma Patil and a Miss Parvati Patil to Mr. Harry Potter, signed and dated by the mothers of both children on October 3, 1981.

Overall value of the House of Potter stands at 1,305,825,687 galleons.

House Black

Vault number 711. High security.

Vault contains 621,521,982 galleons.

Vault also contains a large library on the dark arts, blood magic, and necromancy, many believed to be the only copies in existence. Vault also contains many dark objects, precious gems, and other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Black Manor and several smaller houses scattered in the UK and along the Japanese and Puerto Rican islands.

#12 Grimmauld Place

Borgin & Burkes 97%

Flores Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour 36%

Slug & Jiggers Apothecary 17%

Flourish & Blotts 54%

Gambol & Japes 25%

Zonko's 25%

Eeylops Owl Emporium 38%

Marriage contract to the House of Abbot for the first daughter born.

Double marriage contract for a Miss Daphne Greengrass and a Miss Astoria Greengrass, to the next son born to the House of Black, signed and dated by the Heads of both Houses on July 23, 1982.

Overall value for the House of Black stands at 1,163,583,967 galleons.

House Gryffindor

Vault number 7. Maximum security.

Vault contains 3,167,835,298 galleons.

Vault also contains many precious gems and a large armory full of various armors and weapons. Vault also contains ancient tomes of long forgotten magic, all of which are the last in existence, along with many other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Gryffindor Castle

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry 25%

Ollivander's 65%

Marriage contract to the House of Bones for the first daughter born.

Overall value for the House of Gryffindor stands at 4,918,437,275 galleons.

House Hufflepuff

Vault number 11. Maximum security.

Vault contains 2,316,756,354 galleons.

Vault also contains several other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Hufflepuff Mansion

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry 25%

Marriage contract to the House of Bell for the first daughter born.

Overall value for the House of Gryffindor stands at 3,525,473,905 galleons.

House Ravenclaw

Vault number 9. Maximum security.

Vault contains 2,864,972,768 galleons.

Vault also contains several other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Ravenclaw Manor

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry 25%

Marriage contract to the House of Lovegood for the first daughter born.

Overall value for the House of Ravenclaw stands at 4,167,834,753 galleons.

House Slytherin

Vault number 13. Maximum security.

Vault contains 6,397,732,964 galleons.

Vault also contains several other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry 25%

Marriage contract to the House of Davis for the first daughter born.

Overall value for the House of Slytherin stands at 7,358,710,019 galleons.

House of the Sorcerers

Vault number 512. High security.

Vault contains 340,257,093 galleons.

Vault also contains several other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Sorcerer's Tower

Overall for the House of Sorcerers stands at 870,273,918 galleons.

House Emrys

Vault 1. Top secret. Triple Maximum security. Evacuation necessary to access vault.

Vault contains 23,753,294,847 galleons.

Vault contains several ancient, mythical artifacts, tomes, scrolls, and other objects, each believed to be the only copies to ever be created.

Vault also contains several other priceless artifacts and heirlooms.

Properties and Other Assets

Stonehenge

The Isle of Avalon

Gringotts 51%

Overall value for the House of Emrys stands at 29,348,981,718 galleons.

Gabrielle and Harry both sat stunned for several minutes. Neither one of them had expected anything like this. Harry already knew that he was wealthy, but this was beyond belief. To top it off, he owned

Hogwarts! Harry looked into Gabrielle's eyes, pleading for understanding, as they both thought the same thing. Harry had no choice but to fulfill the marriage contracts since they were magically binding. This made Harry furious.

Ragnok was thoroughly enjoying himself. The young Lord Potter and his companion both looked as if they were about to shit bricks. Ragnok was worried though. Lord Potter would be required to fulfill several marriage contracts. Although multiple marriages weren't unheard of in pureblood society, but the last coven had been over four hundred years previous. "I'll assume that you had no idea of how wealthy you are before this?"

Harry shook his head in reply. "I knew I was wealthy, but this is incredible. I wouldn't be able to spend all this money in ten lifetimes."

"That is quite understandable, Harry. Griphook, what do you think about the accounts."

Griphook looked over at Ragnok with a smile full of teeth and eyes that showed, quite clearly, how much he thought that he would profit from managing Harry's accounts. "I believe that we goblins will profit greatly from working with Harry. Not only are his finances formidable, but the political influence that he is bound to have from the wizengamot seats that he inherited would be a great help to goblins and other magical creatures whose rights are suppressed by wizards. Frankly, Harry could spend tens of millions of galleons a day, and still never run out of gold. The interest made from the accounts would make sure of that."

"Tell me; is there any way to back out of these contracts?" Harry asked Ragnok, earning himself a dazzling smile from an appreciative Gabrielle.

Looking confused, Ragnok replied, "Why would you want to do that? You would have much to gain from joining with these families."

"I don't like the idea of marriage contracts and arranged marriages. I understand that this may be acceptable in the wizard community, but I firmly believe that everyone has the right to choose to marry for love. I don't plan on being forced into it, and I don't like it. I will however, accept it if, and only if, I have no other options. That is,

unless Gabrielle says no, then I will take whatever consequences are due for breaking the contracts myself. I refuse to force myself on any of these girls."

Ragnok looked highly pleased at Harry's reply. Glancing around, Harry noted that Griphook also seemed pleased.

Beside Harry, Gabrielle had sat quietly through most of the meeting, carefully contemplating everything that was being said. She might be young, but veela matured faster than normal witches, and fortunately the veela blood was powerfully dominant in her. Gabrielle understood magical bonds well, being a veela she had to.

Gabriele knew that the bond between her and her soul mate would help her to be more comfortable with what now appeared inevitable, but that didn't mean she had to agree with it. She hadn't had much of a choice when the bond had formed between her and Harry, quite the contrary, she was very content for the time being. However, she couldn't be sure of her feelings about other women being with Harry, especially so soon after she had finally found him.

Squeezing Harry's hand softly, Gabrielle gathered her courage for what she was about to say. She had always been very outgoing, but this was different. This was for life. "Harry," she said quietly, causing him to look directly into her gorgeous eyes.

'She may only be eleven, but I could lose myself in those eyes. I guess this strange attraction to her is something I will have to get used to. But it does feel right in a way.' Harry thought to himself, while gazing at her.

"I know you don't like this. I can feel it from you. Personally, I don't understand my feelings on it either, but this is something that we are going to have to deal with. This bond we have, it's forever. Haven't you noticed that I don't have the slightest bit of French accent? We will talk about the bond later, but know this. I may not have had much choice in it, but I don't regret it. While you were looking over your financial records, I perused the documents for the marriage contracts. You can't break them, even if you wanted to. Your magic would pull you to them and them to you. It's part of the compulsion magic. It helps to ensure that the marriages last and that the contracts are fulfilled. The longer you take to fulfill these contracts, the worse it will be on everyone. Even though that each contract

specifically states that you must be at least seventeen, it would still be hard for you to keep yourself apart from them, and vice versa. If there isn't at least casual contact with each one on a steady basis, everyone involved, including myself would lose their magic."

"Why would you lose your magic?" Harry asked, frowning at the very thought. Here was a young witch, willing to be bound to him forever and love him, and this is the risk she had to take. Harry wouldn't allow it. He had been hurt all his life, and he vowed then and there that he would never hurt Gabrielle. He would always protect his Gabby and put life before his own. 'Wait, my Gabby? Where did that come from?' Harry couldn't deny it though, this angel beside him was his, and he loved it.

"I am bonded to you, Harry. It is a powerful bond, and I can not explain fully to you. Later, we will speak to my mama, and she will be able to help us both to understand it more," she replied quietly, hoping that Harry wouldn't be mad at her.

Harry was a little disappointed at this, but he smiled reassuringly at Gabby to show her that he wasn't upset at her in the least.

"Well said, Miss Delacour. Now, would you like to see the results of the second ritual? As I stated earlier, it will bring to light any special abilities that you may have, including the bloodline that the ability is derived from."

"Yes. Thank you, Ragnok," Harry replied, taking the parchment from the goblin and scanning it over, along with Gabby.

Harry James Potter

Multiple Animagus-Potter

Metamorphmagus-Peverell

Enhanced Speed, Strength, and Senses-Drakul

Enhanced Healing and Regeneration-Drakul

Shadow Magus-Sorcerers

Aura Reading-Gryffindor

Mage Sight-Ravenclaw

Parseltongue-Slytherin

Druid Elven and Elemental Magus-Emrys

Beast Master-Emrys

"What is a shadow mage? And what is the house of sorcerers?" Harry asked, looking up at Ragnok with a dark look upon his face.

"Harry, please allow me to begin with the house of Emrys. It is a crucial point to the story of the true sorcerers of old. Not much is known of the origins of Myrrdhin Emrys, also known as Merlin. Merlin was the founder of the House of Emrys and wielded vast powers over nature. Merlin was not often found among wizards though, he was a Druid, and preferred to spend his time in tune with nature. It was said that he could speak with and control all manner of creatures, and in time he taught the High Elves, whom were the ancestors of the cursed house elves before they were enslaved. He also taught the goblins. He taught both races powerful magic, but each race was taught a different form. All goblins are taught about the origins of our magic at a young age, so we know whom to be thankful to if we ever met one of his descendants. Until today, there were none. During a long period of absence, witches and wizards began to desire more power. They sought to wield the powers of the elements like Merlin. In time, the land began to become ravished by war, and it was unacceptable. Many witches and wizards joined together and built an immense tower, and formed the guild of sorcerers. These sorcerers were the only ones that managed to wield nature's powers, but they were too vast. They often failed in controlling the elemental powers that were unleashed, and in time, Merlin decided to put a stop to it. Nobody really remembers what happened the day that Merlin arrived at the tower, but afterwards, the sorcerers became as shadows. The land all around the tower was scorched and barren, and the tower itself had collapsed, to be rebuilt by Merlin shortly after."

Harry remembered the story of that day. Merlin had told him how he had gathered a great army of creatures, led by the Great Eagles of the Northern mountains, the Mighty Dragons of the Western ranges, the Ancient Serpents of the Southern Seas, and the High Elves of

the Eastern forests. The four great lords, leading their armies from the four corners of the globe were led by Merlin. During the dispersal of power, when Merlin had chosen to bring magic to the mortals, Merlin had given each Lord of the creatures one of the essences of magic each contained within a globe. Borne within each globe was the complete power over each one. Merlin gave Earth to Lord Myrandir of the high elves, Fire to Lord Bahamut of the dragons, Wind to Lord Theros of the Eagles, and Water to Lord Leviathan of the serpents. Merlin himself wielded the last, most terrible force of them all. Merlin had said that it was one of the most beautiful, yet terrible forces in the universe. On their arrival, the sorcerers were struck powerless. The elements that they sought to control turned on them as lightning and raging wildfires swept through the battlefield. Many of the sorcerers tried to flee when massive earthquakes shook the tower's foundations and massive jagged stones rose up and turned the tower's wall to rubble. Unfortunately for them, they were swept into the air and slammed against just about anything, as fiery whirlwinds swept through the tower destroying and burning everything in the paths. The battle lasted all of an hour.

"Are you there, Harry?" Gabrielle had her hand on Harry's shoulder and looking at him worriedly. "You space out there for a few minutes.

Harry hadn't noticed that Ragnok had stopped talking and the look on Gabby's face was heartbreaking. "Yea, I'm fine. I was just reminiscing about a story that I heard. I'm sorry if I upset you Gabby."

Gabrielle was shocked to say the least. She never let anyone outside her family call her Gabby, she hated the name. But somehow, when Harry said it, it sounded right and comforting and she loved it. "It's ok, Harry."

"Are we ready to continue the story then?" Ragnok asked. As the both nodded, Ragnok continued. "After the battle, all the remaining sorcerers were gathered up and cursed. Merlin cursed them to live in the shadows forever as shadow magi and said that one day, their curse would consume them. He also stripped them of their other powers. Although they could still move within any shadows of the world, and become as shadows themselves, they could no longer control the elements, and their most precious gift, the power to become one with the magic around them, drawing off external ambient magic to aid them was also stripped. That power is what set

sorcerers apart from normal witches and wizards. Like them, sorcerers also had magical cores, but the difference was that sorcerers could see and feel the magic around them, and they could use it. Using this power, their magical cores turned from streams to oceans, basically without end and never tiring. Before he left them, Merlin gave them a final judgment, that one day his heir would wield all of their lost power and bring balance back to the world. The last anyone knows of the shadow magi is that they began devouring the souls of creatures and wizards. The constant devouring of souls and necromancy brought them so close to the gates of the spirit world that they were consumed and were forced to feed on their desires in order to survive. They became the race of dementors."

"What do you mean they could become shadows?" Harry asked, frowning in confusion. Harry wanted to know everything he could about his powers and how he could learn to control them.

"I don't know much, though I do know that they could use the shadows to travel long distances, and that they could make their bodies one with the shadows, being completely invisible and undetectable. In shadow form, no physical attack could harm them and they were able to perceive the souls within creatures and wizards. Nobody really understands it, but the claws they had in shadow form were able to rip the soul out near instantly."

"Understood. Well, I really do appreciate you taking your time to see me Ragnok, but as I have several other things to do today, we must be going," Harry said, while standing and taking Gabrielle's hand as she got up beside him.

"If I may, there is one more matter that I must bring to your attention, Harry," Ragnok said curtly, peering over at the two children and thinking to himself. 'They will truly be a powerful couple one of these days. If he truly is the child of prophecy, then perhaps it is time for the goblin nation to take a stand in the war that is coming. Foolish humans. They believe that the self proclaimed Dark Lord is truly gone, yet we goblins no better. Tom Riddle still lives, somehow. He truly was a powerful necromancer before his downfall, but this child. The potential in him is astounding, even without the added powers of his veela mate.'

Loosening his grip on the golden door handle, Harry turned. "What is it?"

"Though you have signed the necessary paperwork to have your family rings and take control of your vaults, there is still the matter of the marriage contracts. Also, your parents' will was never carried out. Also, seeing as your godfather, Lord Sirius Black was never actually convicted, his will remains legal. Though he is not dead, the stipulations that he set for his will to be carried out were that if anything happened to him, whether Azkaban, insanity, or death, this will would be carried out unless another was created afterwards. Both of these wills will be read in two weeks time. Though you are not required to be there, because you have already signed and receive your shares, I would strongly advise that you show up. It could be...enlightening," Ragnok replied, having the same evil grin on his face that Griphook now had, as he had momentarily ceased peering over the numerous documents.

"Thank you, Ragnok. We will consider the contracts and get back to you on that matter later. Rest assured that I will be there. There are a few people that I would love to see get what's coming to them," Harry replied, showing a mischievous grin of his own. Remembering goblin formality, Harry bowed respectfully and said, "May your gold flow freely, and your enemies bleed rivers."

Griphook stared speechless at Harry as Ragnok replied, "And to you, Lord Potter. May your fortunes never run dry, and the fates forever guide your blade."

Taking Gabrielle's hand, the couple walked back down the hall towards the main lobby. Finally, it began to sink in that he would have to deal with not only Dumbledore, Harry wasn't stupid enough to believe that the old man would miss this chance to drill him, but also Gabrielle's father. The French auror looked to be an imposing man, even though he had an air of kindness around him. Still, Harry wasn't at all looking forward to the talk that he knew he would get from the man.

Walking hand in hand with Harry, Gabrielle was happier than she had ever been, but she was also nervous. She could feel the tension building in Harry as they neared the lobby, and squeezed his hand firmly and offered him what she hoped was a reassuring smile. She knew her papa. He loved both his little girls, her older sister Fleur and herself, but he had also accepted years ago what they were. Even before they were born, Fleur and Gabrielle's mother had

explained to their father that if he had daughters, they would have veela blood, and be susceptible to the prejudiced laws that applied to part humans. Gabrielle's mother, Appoline, also explained to him of veela bonds, in order to prepare him for the possibilities.

"Hey Harry! Over 'ere!"

"Huh?" Harry and Gabrielle looked over and saw Hagrid waving at them from the middle of the main lobby.

"Hagrid, have you seen Dumbledore? He was supposed to be waiting for Gabrielle and I. Her father is with him and we need to meet back up with them," Harry called back to Hagrid, as he and Gabrielle strolled over to the half giant.

"Aye. Dumbledore and Monsieur Delacour are waitin' fer ye both at the Leaky Cauldron. An' don' worry Harry, I've got yer school supplies for ya. I'll bring ya back tomorrow to get yer robes and wand. Right now, I've got to take you two to Dumbledore," Hagrid answered, peering down curiously at the two.

"That's ok, Hagrid. Tomorrow I have to get a few other things in Diagon Alley and I'm sure Gabrielle and I can manage. I can get gold from my vault first thing in the morning."

"Are ye sure, Harry? I don't mind," Hagrid asked. He really liked Harry, and he had been good friends with his parents. Hagrid didn't want him to be afraid of him.

Smiling at Hagrid, Gabrielle said, "He's sure, Hagrid. He promised to take me shopping."

Harry gulped while laughter danced in Hagrid's eyes. "Yer gonna regret that, Harry. Women are dead scary when they're shopping. Mark my words, yer gonna wish ye had a room full of featherweight charms by the time yer done. Probably an extra bag or two of gold too." Hagrid roared with laughter as Harry glared at him.

Gabrielle on the other hand, looked indignant. "Hey! I'm not that bad. All I want is my wand, a new trunk, a cauldron, and some new dress robes," she said, causing Harry's eyes to wide at her. "I wouldn't say no to some new books and a broom either," she said sweetly, batting her eyelashes at Harry.

Harry smelled certain doom. What was worse, Hagrid smelled it too, and he thought it was funny as hell. Hagrid was leaning against the open door to the leaky cauldron trying to catch his breath from seeing the look of dread in Harry's eyes.

"Give it up, Harry," Jean said, having caught Gabrielle's comment. Jean smirked at his daughter. "My little angel has been taught well by her mother and older sister. Be sure that you'll regret that offer young man, although I should be thanking you for it."

This earned a glare from both Gabrielle and Apolline as they all sat down around the table. Harry looked around as he sat down and spotted Quirrell. 'You're going to regret it this time Quirrell. You pathetic bastard, sharing your soul with Voldemort.' Quirrell seemed to be as jumpy as usual. Overall, it was very dark and shabby. A few old women were sitting in a corner, drinking tiny glasses of sherry. One of them was smoking a long pipe and a little man in a top hat was talking to the old barman, who was quite bald and looked like a gummy walnut.

Unfortunately for Harry, this was also the moment that a few of the others in the room recognized him. Harry soon found himself shaking hands with nearly everyone in the pub.

"Welcome back, Mr. Potter"

"It's a pleasure to finally meet you, Mr. Potter.

One witch was so delighted to meet him that she came back more than once to shake his hand.

"Welcome back sir. My name is Dedalus Diggle," the little man in the top hat said while shaking his hand.

Acting surprised, Harry said, " Hey I remember you! You bowed to me once in the grocery store. My aunt was so scared she pissed herself and left the store. She wasn't used to anyone knowing me and knew what that meant. She refused to go shopping there for two months!"

Tears of laughter were streaming down my face as the others at the table stared at him.

"You hear that folks? He remembers me!" the little man squeaked.

Harry's scar prickled as Quirrell approached him. Harry didn't know whether they were all blind, or just didn't care when he glared at him coldly. If Harry hadn't been paying close attention to Quirrell's reaction to him, he would have missed the dark look that crossed the older wizard's face.

Dumbledore smiled and patted Harry on the shoulder before introducing Quirrell. "Harry, this is Professor Quirrell. He will be your defense against the dark arts instructor.

"N-Nice to m-m-meet you P-Potter," Quirrell said, reaching out to shake Harry's hand.

Harry had was barely able to restrain himself from cursing Quirrell on the spot. He had to stop Quirrell before he got to the sorcerer's stone, but he had all school year for that. There was a time and place for everything, and for now, he had to let the bastard walk away free.

Gabrielle wasn't the only one who saw the look in Harry's eyes. Dumbledore was startled by the look of intense hatred in Harry's eyes before he quickly hid it. He had seen that look before. Harry wanted to kill the man, but as far as Dumbledore knew, they had never met before and judging by Quirrell's reaction, or lack thereof, they hadn't. Nothing made sense, and unless Albus seriously missed his guest, this child was not Harry Potter. But how could that be? Albus Dumbledore prided himself on being an extremely learned wizard and he new full well what the scar on Harry's forehead could really mean. After all, Dumbledore had tried every spell that he knew in order to conceal it, but there was simply no way. 'No, it has to be Harry. The dark aura around his scar is unmistakable. No spell or potion could recreate or mimic that. What are you Harry?' Bowing his head, the old wizard vowed to keep a closer eye on Harry. There had been too many surprises already.

Gabrielle glanced at Harry and tensed. For some reason, Harry hated this man. Gabrielle could see the muscles tightening in his neck, and his free hand underneath the table was clenched so hard that it was quickly turning white. Gabrielle didn't know what to think. Professor Quirrell didn't appear to be much of a problem. He was

actually trembling from head to toe as he reached his hand out to shake Harry's. Honestly, Gabrielle didn't know how the man could teach the DADA when he jumped at every new sound and appeared to be scared of his own shadow. There was something even stranger though. There was an eerie smell around his turban. Seeing Harry shake Quirrell's hand, she dismissed her suspicions.

"It's a pleasure to meet you too, Professor," Harry replied while shaking Quirrell's hand quickly before letting it go.

"I'll b-be looking forward t-to s-s-seeing you in my c-classes, Mr. P-Potter. I r-really must be g-going now. I have s-several things I n-need to do in D-Diagon Alley," Quirrell stuttered out as he quickly pulled his hand back to his chest and squeaked before running out the door.

The group watched a retreating Quirrell before they turned to look at Harry and Gabrielle, making both of their cheeks turn bright red.

"Well, eet seems like we 'ave much to discuss," Apolline said, drawing the attention of the rest.

Harry watched as the mid-aged witch cast several secrecy and anti-spying charms all around their table. He could definitely tell where Gabrielle got her looks from. Harry had been fourteen before he died, and he knew a beautiful witch when he saw one. Apolline Delacour was tall, beautiful, and blonde. Like her daughters, she got her looks from her veela heritage.

Dumbledore frowned as the French witch cast her charms around the table. Even though he recognized all the spells she was using, he raised his eyebrows at a few of them. Why would she go to such lengths to protect their privacy? What could she possibly know that he didn't? He had watched Harry closely all of his life, and the knowledge of several types of veela bonds was fairly common knowledge.

Harry gulped, realizing that Apolline knew his secret, or at least expect it. How could he have been so stupid? Of course she had to know something, even Monsieur Delacour didn't seem all that surprised when Gabrielle attached herself to Harry, saying that he was the man from her dreams. Harry had hoped to keep his past a secret, at least for a while longer, but if Gabrielle had dreams of her

future memories and told them to her parents, then it shouldn't have been that hard to figure it out on their own.

Sitting back down, Apolline fixed Harry with an apprehensive look. "You are Mr. Potter, eez that correct?"

Nodding, Harry replied, "Please call me Harry."

"Az you wish," she affirmed. "Then please call me Apolline, after all, you shall be my son-eeen-law one day."

This comment made both Dumbledore's and Hagrid's eyes pop out of their heads, although the rest of the group seemed unaffected by the remark. How could that be? Dumbledore shook his head. This was impossible. Dumbledore himself had already acted in Harry's best interests as his magical guardian weeks ago, and signed an unbreakable marriage contract between Harry and a young muggleborn witch that would be going to Hogwarts for her first year also. The young Miss Granger was a brilliant child, and being with Harry could easily bring her out of her shell. He seemed friendly enough, and friends weren't something that she had in abundance. This bond between Harry and Gabrielle was troublesome though. Albus knew full well that most veela bonds were based on love or another powerful emotion and could not be broken.

Breaking from his thoughts, Dumbledore watched Apolline attentively as she fixed Harry with a stare and asked, "How old are you 'Arry?"

"I just turned eleven today," Harry answered. Harry hoped that if Apolline knew the truth, she could understand his situation and forgive his deception. He would only state the truth if she proved that she already knew.

"How old are you really, 'Arry?"

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows. Where was the Delacour matriarch going with this line of questioning? Puzzled, Dumbledore watched Harry's face for any kind of reaction, but the boy stared back blankly at Apolline.

"I'm fourteen. How did you know?" Harry asked her, mainly to confirm his suspicions, even though he was pretty sure he already knew what the answer to his question would be.

Everyone else's jaws dropped as they stared dumbfounded at Harry. Only Gabrielle and her mother seemed unaffected by the revelation.

"Gabrielle 'as been having dreams lately, and calling out your name. When her papa and I asked her about them, she told us of many things that have not yet happened. Many of these things, she could not have known, such as the specifics of the triwizard tournament that we are currently her to plan with Dumbledore. Eet is still top secret, and isn't planned on taking place for anoizzer three years. In ze veela history, there are a few veela zat once bonded, had many memories of things that were not theirs. What eet doesn't explain, ees how Gabrielle could have memories of the future. Eet started to make sense to me until she told me of her memory of you saving her life from ze mermen. She has never been to Hogwarts, yet her description of ze school fits exactly what Jean has told me of it. When you saved her life that day and she acknowledged it, a veela life bond was formed. She owes you a life debt and eet is said that ze bond carries over death eetself. I believe zat this is ze reason for her memories. However, everything she has told me ends at one night. What happened ze night of ze third task?"

He'd been found out. This was not the way that he had wanted to reveal it, especially to Dumbledore, and according to the look that the headmaster was giving him, a long explanation was expected. Seeing the looks in their faces, he said simply, "I died."

Seeing stunned expressions all around the table, Harry sighed and told them everything that had happened in his fourth year.

"So, Voldemort returned, Harry?" Dumbledore asked gently in his grandfather voice, causing everyone at the table except Harry to wince at the name. "Ahh, I am glad that you are not afraid of the name, Harry. After all..."

"Fear of the name only increases fear of the thing itself," Harry finished for him. Dumbledore beamed brightly at him. "Yes, he returned. Wormtail used my blood to resurrect him. We will discuss this later, headmaster. For now, I wish to continue my conversation with Apolline."

Dumbledore paled at the name, but nodded. Harry had neglected to mention Wormtail's name as the one who resurrected the Dark Lord when telling his story. If this boy truly had knowledge of the future, then what else was going to happen that Harry hadn't told them yet?

"How does that explain Gabrielle's dream though? She doesn't owe me a life debt. None of it has happened yet?" Harry calmly asked Apolline.

"Gabrielle's feelings for you transformed ze bond. A veela's powers come from their emotions. When she chose you, the bond transformed. You became her soul mate, and her magic is making her ze perfect mate for you. Don't doubt that it is what she wanted; we can all plainly see that she is happy with you and eet would be disastrous to try to force you both apart. The soul bond forges a powerful connection between ze veela and her mate. As proved by both of you, zis bond overcomes death itself, and has brought her soul back with yours. You should consider it a blessing. You will both be very happy togezzer."

Harry thought over her words for a minute and looked at Gabrielle, seeing hope and love in her eyes. "If I didn't already know that Gabby was happy, I would find a way to break the bond. I don't mind it at all. I look forward to getting to know her, but she should still have the right to choose who she wants to be with, without magical interference."

Gabrielle smiled at her nickname. Sure, her sister Fleur had called her Gabby several times, but it was different coming from her chérir une. The term of endearment warmed her in new ways, and she loved it.

"You can not break ze bond. Eet would be very harmful to my daughter if you attempted eet. I admire your views towards her, though. Most people would seemly see her beauty and use her. Wizards have treated veela like so for centuries. I was going to ask you of your views, but you have answered my questions for me. Now, hopefully I can persuade professor Dumbledore to allow her to attend Hogwarts with you?" Appoline said while looking over at Dumbledore, who nodded his approval.

"I will speak with the board of governors immediately, Madame Delacour. I daresay that Harry can buy her supplies for her tomorrow when they go to Diagon Alley together. I agree with you that it would be best for the both of them that they remain together."

"Thank you, professor Dumbledore. Now, perhaps we should allow the children to get some rest while we discuss the arrangements?" she said, looking over at a tired Gabrielle.

"That would be wise. Harry, I can see that you are not at all tired, but there are things that we must discuss away from you both. It would be a good idea for you to help Miss Delacour to bed. There is a great deal of things that I wish to discuss with you, but now is not the time. I will speak with you at the train station as you requested in the letter you sent to me last night," Dumbledore replied.

Turning around, Harry stopped for a moment and said, "Headmaster, I have not sent you any letters that I can recall. Not since I came back." Harry then continued helping Gabrielle up the stairs and they disappeared into Harry's room leaving Dumbledore more confused than ever. 'If Harry didn't send that letter, then who did? Dumbledore highly doubted that Harry was lying to him. He was, after all, a well accomplished legilimens and he did not detect any signs of deceit from Harry. Something was up. Dumbledore decided that he would keep his plans to meet with Harry at the King's Cross station. Perhaps he would find some more clues then.

Gabrielle was happy. It had been a very eventful day, but in the end, she had her *ch  rir une*. She smiled and cuddled closer, feeling Harry's heartbeat under her head. True, at first she had been worried. She had feared that he would reject her, or just use her for her body, like most wizards would do. As the day went on, Gabrielle learned that she had nothing of the sort to fear. Harry seemed to genuinely want to get to know her, and she felt safe when she was with him. Even better, her mama and papa were sending her to Hogwarts! She soon drifted off to sleep, dreaming of the wonderful year that she had ahead of her.

Harry was lying back in bed thinking about everything that had happened. He hadn't expected Gabby to come into his life the way she had. He actually hadn't planned most of what had happened that day, especially having to reveal his past, or future, whatever you want to call it. This time around, he would make sure he got all the

answers from Dumbledore. He wouldn't actively go against Dumbledore. Even though Dumbledore always had his best interests at heart, Harry had grown tired of the old coot's manipulations. If he wanted Harry's help this time around, he had damned well better give him all the relevant information. He would have to go tomorrow to get his wand and some robes, and he would take Gabby with him and buy her the things she needed also. Harry was trapped at the moment. He was on his back and Gabrielle was turned on her side with her head on his chest and one of her legs draped across his. Harry smiled as he felt Gabby cuddle closer to him and sigh into his chest. Before long, her breathing became steady and Harry followed soon after, but not before wondering why the hell the adults trusted them so explicitly.

Author's Notes:

For those of you who have questions on who will be in the coven.

Gabrielle Delacour

Hermione Granger

Ginevra Molly Weasley

Tracey Davis

Padma Patil

Parvati Patil

Daphne Greengrass

Astoria Greengrass

Hannah Abbot

Susan Bones

Luna Lovegood

Nymphadora Black (Tonks) Refer to will reading in later chapter.

Su Li

Katie Bell

Alicia Spinnet

North-Wind-Eagles

South-Water-Serpents

East-Earth-High Elves

West-Fire-Dragons

Center-?-?... Take a guess. I'm pretty sure many of you can guess the power, but is anyone pure enough to guess the creature that wields that terrifying power? For the first person to guess correctly and post it in the reviews, I will answer one question about what I plan on doing in this story. AKA Major Spoiler. The question must be specific.

For the sake of this fanfiction, Ginny and Luna will be 1 year younger than Harry and Astoria will be 2 years younger. Tonks will be the normal 6 years older and all the others will be in the same year. I have had multiple requests to bring Fleur in also, and I will think about it. Bear in mind that if I do, it will be during the fourth year. If anyone else has any suggestions, I'd be glad to listen to them. Again, thank you all for your reviews, at this point; it's the only thing keeping me motivated. I get bored pretty easily, and I always did hate writing, although I just couldn't resist this once. Just to see how it goes.

Chapter 4: Diagon Alley

Leaky Cauldron: London

A few hours after Harry and Gabrielle had gone to bed, Hagrid and Dumbledore were the only ones of the group still at the Leaky Cauldron, as Hagrid had been given a letter by Gabrielle's parents that he promised to give them before he and Dumbledore returned to Hogwarts.

Shortly before midnight, Dumbledore stopped mid sentence in his conversation with Hagrid and looked up in shock. Dumbledore felt several waves of magic, quickly building in strength, and threatening to overwhelm his senses.

Hagrid looked worried as Dumbledore dashed up the stairs; with an agile grace that a wizard of his age should never have, and threw open the door to Harry's and Gabrielle's room, wand at the ready. Before he realized that whatever Dumbledore saw had stopped him dead in his tracks, Hagrid had swept up the stairs and pushed past Dumbledore into the room before gaping at the sight before him.

Though no torches were lit in the hallway or the room, the room was as bright as daylight. On the bed, they saw two figures. The one laying on his back was Harry, or so Dumbledore assumed. What was strange was the fact that his body was glowing with an intense green and golden light and Dumbledore felt, before he saw, the magic cackling like bluish lightning all over his body, periodically shooting outward to strike out at the walls and furniture. The room was already in shambles, and Dumbledore quickly cast several powerful shield spells to contain the destruction to the room. Almost as soon as Dumbledore completed his final spell, Harry's and Gabrielle's bodies both began to slowly rise, levitating in the air about three feet above the bed. Somehow, it seemed that Harry's magic was protecting her as well. As they watched, both bodies were cocooned in the magic, and they could see it rippling across Harry's body, stabbing into him at various points.

Dumbledore had seen the powers of wizards mature several times in his long life, but although the signs were the same, he could feel that this was different. Harry's magic appeared to be healing several years of abuse and malnourishment, and his body also seemed to be changing to accommodate the massive amounts of raw magic

that Dumbledore sensed. Also, there was no possible way that his powers were fully maturing, seeing as Harry was only eleven. Still, Dumbledore, and indeed Hagrid, could not help but to feel awed and overwhelmed by the sheer intensity of Harry's powers, which were already easily rivaling Dumbledore's own.

About half an hour after it began, the glow of magic turned pure white, and Dumbledore heard phoenix song as magic shot out from every pore in Harry's body and turned into a blazing whirlwind that tore around the room, burning everything in site, before a final outburst of magic blew from Harry's body outward, causing Hagrid and Dumbledore both to shield their eyes to keep from being blinded.

When he looked again, Dumbledore could see traces of the magic in the air around the room, and though they were lying back on the bed, Harry's body was still softly radiating power that came in ever weakening waves that warmed the room and Dumbledore as well. Surprisingly, the room looked as it did before, as if the magical wildfire and whirlwind hadn't swept through the room. There wasn't even the slightest burn from the magical lightning that had been striking out at every surface in the room. In fact, the only change that he could see, besides Harry glowing of course, was the phoenix perched on the top of the coat rack. Dumbledore smiled to himself as Hagrid stared in awe before setting Gabrielle's parents' letter on the desk and walking out of the room. 'Fawkes will be proud tonight. His daughter has chosen a fine master.' Indeed, Dumbledore had only seen Fawkes' daughter once. She was a magnificent bird, but even more prideful than Fawkes. Dumbledore's face was serene as he turned and vanished. This was a sure sign that Harry's heart was pure, otherwise Selene would never have come to him. Many things about the boy confused and worried him, especially the display he had just seen, but he would back off the boy for now. His main worry was that Harry would turn dark, but his fears had just been swept away by Selene. Albus had been almost seventy years old when he met Fawkes, but even then, Selene had glared at him and deemed him impure and unworthy of her.

Harry awoke the next morning to a soft purring from the head on his chest. For some reason, Harry could feel powerful magic tingling in the air, all around the room. 'Probably from Dumbledore, but what would he come in here for?' he thought to himself. Harry couldn't believe that her parents had let her stay the night with him, especially since they had just met him. Harry really didn't want to get

up, but he also had to use the loo. He couldn't remember when he had ever slept so well. Perhaps that had to do a bit with the beautiful witch currently passed out across his chest. After a while, he couldn't hold it anymore and stroked his hand gently through Gabby's hair, earning a cute purr from her and causing her to tighten her grip on him and cuddle her head harder to his chest.

"Gabby, please, I need to get up," he pleaded with her, making her groan before smiling.

"Uh uh, too early."

"Well, I was planning on making Ollivander's our first stop today," Harry said mischievously. He knew the thought of having her own first wand would get her up in a heartbeat. Come to think of it, it'd work on just about any witch or wizard.

Sure enough, Gabby's head came up with a snap. "Really? Are you really going to get me a wand today, Mon chéri?" she asked just before her mouth dropped open and her eyes widened, staring at him in shock.

"What is it Gabby?" Harry asked. He was concerned. She had looked at him like she didn't even know him before she had looked into his eyes. At the point she had seemed to relax, but the moment passed so quickly that Harry barely caught the passing emotions behind her eyes. "What's wrong?"

"Harry, go look at yourself in the mirror, do you remember what Ragnok said about your body changing to adjust to the influx of magic?"

Harry got up and walked to the mirror that was on the back of the desk. He was stunned by what he saw. Harry blushed beet red as he realized that he was only wearing boxers, and Gabby had seen him half naked.

Though he didn't recall ever changing out of his clothes, he could plainly see that all the scars he had from the years of beatings by his uncle had disappeared. He had bulked up a bit and the muscles of his arms, legs, and torso were rippled powerfully under his skin. He wasn't muscle bound, but his body was rock hard, and he could tell from the look on Gabby's face that she definitely approved of his

new abs. Harry had also grown a couple inches, not much, but he was now of average height for wizards his age. And his unruly hair had also grown. Now, it came down in jet black waves to just below his shoulder blades and had white tips. What was weird though, was that the front of his hair wasn't as long as the rest. It was a couple inches long and now spiked backwards, tipped in dazzling white. Harry also noticed that his scar was faintly traced in emerald green. Harry nearly sang for joy when he realized that he could see without his glasses. In fact, his vision was beyond perfect, and sounds and smells from all around him were assaulting his senses. He would have to get used to this.

"Wow," Gabrielle said. Harry could only nod in reply, before noticing that she had her eyes on a beautiful phoenix that was now sitting on the bed beside her. Harry jumped in surprise at the flash of fire that linked them when Gabby reached out to touch it.

Quickly crossing the room, Harry reached Gabrielle and inspected her. Finding nothing, he saw the broad grin on her face.

"Why are you grinning? What's so funny and what just happened Gabby?" he asked.

Gabrielle was surprised when she saw the phoenix beside her. They were supposed to be really rare, and hardly ever showed themselves to humans. Still, Gabrielle felt a connection to the one beside her, which really confused her. Phoenixes were creatures of purity, and while veela weren't necessarily dark creatures, as was widely believed, they were far from pure.

Veela were sexual creatures, creatures of desire, and when angered, could transform into their avian form. As cousins of the sirens, full blooded veela could very well live off the life force of another. While the voices of sirens were their allure and fed solely off the life force of their victims, full blooded veela however, had a pheromonal allure and could choose whether or not to feed off of the sexual energies of theirs.

Pushing her doubts to the side, Gabrielle allowed her curiosity to get the best of her and reached forward. The phoenix seemed to understand her hesitancy as her hand stopped a couple inches from it, and looked her in the eye. For some reason that she could not describe, Gabrielle felt that it was right and reached her hand the

rest of the way to stroke the phoenix and just as her hand touched it, there was a flash of fire that wrapped itself around her hand, linking her to it. Before she could react, however, she heard a voice in her mind.

~Greetings, young one.~

'What's going on? Who are you?' she thought back to the voice. It seemed weird to her at first, but looking at the phoenix beside her, she understood. It was communicating to her through her mind. But what did that mean?

~I am Selene, daughter of Fawkes. I believe that my father's master was here shortly before I arrived. I have long sought to meet you, young one. The weight of the world is laid upon the shoulders of your mate, yet you shall also require a great deal of help. I came here to be joined with you. For as long as you live, I shall be your partner, your familiar. I can sense the doubt in you. Though the blood of your heritage indeed runs true, your heart is pure. In the years of darkness that are to come, you shall be the light in the shadows. Though your mate shall stand before the wizarding world and lead them from it, you shall be his light, his reason for living, and to fight. His destiny is great, but it can also be terrible, the choice is his to make. But know this, without the connections of the heart, his power can never truly be unleashed. It is the heart that binds and holds the key to a terrible power.~

'What do you mean by all that? How is any of that possible?' she thought back furiously. Selene spoke to her in careful riddles, and obviously knew much of what was going on. Sighing to herself, Gabrielle realized that it might just be true that phoenixes could see the future. Though they had their burning days, they were technically immortal, and it was rumored that they basically stood outside time itself, and could gaze upon the past, present, and future.

~In time you will understand, but not now. You are still young for a human, and have much to learn. But be prepared, when the war comes again, the armies must be gathered once more, and magic must cleanse itself of the darkness brought to it by the very nature of humanity. Such as been divined.~

"Gabby."

Harry's voice seemed to bring her out of it. Gabrielle had just sat there for a few minutes, grinning before her face grew solemn. At first, Harry thought that something good had happened to her, but now he didn't know. Even as she came out of it, she looked upset.

"Are you alright, Gabby," he asked her softly, while stroking her hair with his hand? Harry didn't understand. Merlin had stressed a great deal about changing the past too much.

'Time is like water in a pond' he said. 'When one meddles with time, each action sets the present onto a different path into the future. Each action causes a ripple effect in time, just as a ripple in the middle of a pond, caused by a rock. The future, like the water, does not remain the same. Instead, small ripples occur and things are changed. Now imagine if someone were to throw several rocks at different spots in the pond. The ripples would not flow freely. Instead, the ripples would spread out and clash against each other. Time is also like this, the more your actions change the future, the more time itself is unbalanced. Strive ahead in your goals with caution Harry. If things change too much, the effects could throw off the very scales that Fate herself has carefully balanced in order to banish the darkness that is the Dark Lord. Remember one final thing, Harry. As things change, your knowledge of the future becomes increasingly useless.'

Indeed, things had changed a great deal already. For one, Harry was no longer welcome at the Dursley's, as if he would agree to go back there anyways. He had more than enough money to provide for himself, and he was very capable of defending himself, even though the latter fact must remain as secret as possible. Also, Harry had not expected having Gabby this time around. He was secretly pleased, of course. He found himself enjoying her company very much, even in the short time that they had together so far. She was very shy around people she didn't know, but also really sweet and strong-willed when the need arose. Harry didn't at all envy the person who got on the receiving end of her temper. He had seen Gabby go off on a drunk that seemed to think that even underage veela were sex toys. Harry and Gabby were both outraged, as were several other patrons of the Leaky Cauldron. After a few minutes however, all who watched were shocked as the cute, petite girl gave the drunk a tongue lashing that all but sobered up several of the listeners, including the pervert, who was by this point in tears with magic restraining cuffs placed on him by two aurors that were

angrily packing up their dinner to go. Lucius Malfoy was not having a good night.

Another thing was his letter to Dumbledore. There were certain things that he could not allow to happen, and he was going to take care of it straight away, but when he had awoke the next morning, the letter was missing. Having a lot to do already, Harry had dismissed the fact, determining that he might have misplaced it, and decided to look for it later. After all, he still had to figure out a way to get the letter to Dumbledore in the first place, he didn't have Hedwig yet. What he hadn't expected however, was that when he asked Dumbledore if he had received his letter, the headmaster said yes. Harry was still confused at Dumbledore's question as he and Gabby walked to their room the night before. If Harry had heard him correctly, Dumbledore assumed that he had sent him the letter, when Harry had assumed, due to Dumbledore's affirmative answer earlier, that Hagrid had given Dumbledore the letter, after seeing who it was from. Harry had, of course, written the letter. But by no means had he sent it. Whether for good or evil, someone was watching Harry carefully, and Harry had to get to the bottom of it before he made a fatal error. Last thing was the phoenix that had just appeared. Things were changing too fast, and Harry wasn't so certain that it would end up being for the best.

"Yea, I'm okay, Harry," Gabrielle replied, looking up at Harry, confusion showing in her eyes.

Harry didn't miss the look in her eyes, but he let it go. If she wanted to tell him, then she would. "Gabby, if you don't feel comfortable talking about it, then that's fine. I'll be here if you change your mind. No matter what you say, it won't change my opinion of you."

"It's not that, Harry. This phoenix, her name is Selene. She spoke to me, Harry. I don't know. Some of the things she told me are confusing, but I don't want to talk about it just now."

Harry met her eyes, and she noticed the concern showing in his. Gabrielle didn't know whether she should tell Harry about what Selene had said or not. The way Selene had spoken, it was meant for Gabrielle only, but couldn't she trust Harry? She felt, no knew that she could, but for now she wanted to try to figure out these things on her own.

Changing the subject, she giggled. Oh, today was going to be so much fun! "Harry, can we just forget about this for now and go shopping? Please?"

Harry noticed the change of subject, but let it go as soon as he saw the evil grin on Gabby's face, right before she started giggling and mentioned shopping. Harry gulped. He was in for a long day, and he knew it. "Let's go then. We still have to drop by Gringotts first though. Get dressed so we can leave. I'm going to go to the loo first and after I get changed I'll be right out."

Harry was still dreading the long day he was bound to have and if he wasn't terrified enough already, the moment he left the bathroom, Gabby squealed and grabbed his hand, nearly dragging him all the way to Gringotts.

Gringotts, Diagon Alley, London

When they finally stopped, Harry stood panting. Gabby was a right terror when she was this excited. He could barely stay on his feet long enough to keep up with her. She had a tight grip on his hand the whole way.

Grinning at Harry, Gabrielle got a mischievous look on her face before she broke down laughing. "I'm sorry, Harry. I guess I'm a little excited."

"A little?" Harry glared at her in mock anger. If he was honest with himself, he'd have to admit that if he was in her shoes, he would think it highly amusing to have just dragged someone that far, making them trip over their own feet, along with several other things, several times.

"Well, a lot. I have never been to any of the stores here in England, and I'm very anxious to see what they have," Gabrielle answered him.

A few goblins stared at the two as Harry and Gabrielle turned and walked up to one of the podiums, where a goblin sat counting various gems. Neither one noticed the ancient looking goblin that was hidden from sight, just behind the podium and to the left. At the elder goblin's nod, the younger goblin in front of Harry and Gabrielle gave a glance to Harry and Gabrielle before continuing his task.

"365...67... and 491 rubies"

"923 rubies," Harry said, catching the goblin's eye. The goblin gave a curt nod and continued.

"94...218... and 207 emeralds....," the goblin trailed off and eyed Harry expectantly.

Without missing a beat Harry answered, "519 emeralds," causing the goblin to show his teeth in a smile.

Again, the goblin continued, matching Harry's pace. "Finally we have 412...119... and 378 diamonds."

"You have 899 diamonds in that purse," Harry replied, while giving a short, respectful nod to the goblin.

"Thank you Lord Potter. Before I help you today, I would like to thank you. For far too long, wizards have treated goblins as inferior. Most, when ignored as I did to you, would have become furious with pompous rage, and demanded to be served, yet not only did you show respect by allowing me to complete my task, you even lowered yourself and put your mind towards helping me. Not many wizards have treated goblins as equals in the past, Lord Potter. I have been given the honor and authority, given that you passed this unknown test of character, to extend a hand in allegiance to you."

"The goblin nation has been treated very poorly in the past, and has chosen to stay out of the wars between the Dark and the Light. However, we feel that by allying ourselves with you, the goblin nation will, in the end, come out for the better. We wish to regain our rights, which wizards have constantly stripped over the years. Indeed, there has been bloodshed, and misunderstandings caused by both sides, but it is most often caused by wizards' lack of respect for our customs. The best prime example I can give for this is ownership laws. Unlike wizards, when we sell our craftsmanship, it is to that person only, and can not be passed as heirlooms. A fine way of explaining this would be to say that the buyer rents the ownership from the goblin craftsman, until his or her death. Upon the buyer's death, the item is returned, and if not, it is considered stolen. Many on both sides have wronged us, but you have not. If you wish, Lord Potter, the whole of the Goblin Nation shall stand behind you.

In you, the world shall find unity once more, and we believe that the prejudices of old will be banished forever."

Harry was dumbstruck. He had somehow known before that he was being tested for some reason, but this was huge! The goblins were well known to be cunning and greedy, and cared only for their wealth and crafts. They had always stayed out of wizarding wars, but they were now offering to stand behind him in a war that many believed was long over. What would they have to gain? Of course they would want to be out from under the boot of wizarding rule, but what else? Something else had to be up, but for now, he would go along with it. Cunning or not, goblins were also infamous to holding their word, especially if they came out better for it.

"Why would you make this offer to me? I'm only eleven years old, and I haven't even started school yet. Surely, there must be many, more knowledgeable wizards and witches that can fight for your rights," Harry stated. He had thought his words over carefully, and carefully gauged the goblin's reaction, which was again, not what he had expected.

The goblin in question broke out into a broad grin as the ancient goblin made himself known. "Lord Potter, if you and your Lady would please follow me, we can speak in private.

'How could I have been so foolish? That goblin must have been standing there the whole time, and if he had been a death eater, I'd be dead. Even if it's still a few years off, I must maintain CONSTANT VIGILANCE!' Harry thought to himself, carefully hiding his thoughts behind an emotionless mask on his face, using his Occlumency. As Harry's mental barriers went up to full strength, he nodded towards the goblin and he and Gabrielle quickly followed the ancient goblin to a small room, just off the right hand side of the lobby. It was for all intents and purposes, a normal room, normally reserved for those making private transactions, and only held a small table in the middle, surrounded by chairs, and it had a shield, bearing the Gringotts seal, on the wall opposite of the door.

Although the goblin gestured to two chairs that had appeared for Harry and Gabrielle to sit in on one side of the table, they both waited until the ancient goblin had taken his seat, before nodding respectfully and taking their own.

"Very well," the goblin said, looking to make sure that the two children were paying close attention to him. "Before we begin, I would like to introduce myself to you Lord Potter. And before you say it, please allow me to use your title, as it shows a respect for your position. In time, you will have to get used to this in order to use your political might and influence to change the wizarding world for the better. I am the Chief Elder Wolfclaw. I am the chief elder of the goblin council, and head of the three Goblin Nations. On the request of my younger brother, Ragnok, who is head of the tribe you are most accustomed to dealing with, I took the liberty to call a meeting to council, and upon passing the test of character, we decided to stand behind you. Now, I believe I must still answer your question from earlier. We goblins know of you, Lord Potter. We have our own time chamber, which vastly exceeds what your ministry is capable of, so we are well aware of the signs of time travel. Fear not warrior, for through the rituals, we have seen the future through your eyes and have come to realize that we have long assumed correctly that the Dark Lord will soon return and we will not betray your secret. For this, you will have the full strength of the goblins behind you. Call and we will answer. Our blades shall flood the battlefield with your enemies' blood."

"And your gold shall run rivers forevermore," Harry finished, causing Wolfclaw to lean forward in a bow. "When that day comes, I will be proud to stand beside the goblins, as warriors and equals. But let us hope that day never comes. Too many lives have been lost to and because of Voldemort already."

With this, Harry reached his hand across the table and shook the hand of Wolfclaw. Surprisingly, the ancient goblin was still strong, and his handshake was firm.

"Well said, Lord Potter. Now, before we can finish, I must ask you to look this over and sign it. It is your parents' will, and since you are the sole Heir and Beneficiary, as long as you are here, there need be no reading of the will, with your approval of course." Wolfclaw handed the will over to Harry, who took it and read it over.

Sure enough, it was actually quite short and simple. His parents had stated that they were of sound mind and body and had left their son, one Harry James Potter, everything. All their gold, properties, titles, and other assets were now officially his.

Harry signed his parents' will and handed it back to Wolfclaw, who took it and smiled. "Lord Potter, now how can I help you today? I apologize for the delay, and keeping you, so I will personally take care of all of your needs today."

Gabrielle, who had been quietly listening and thinking things over until now, replied before Harry could. "Chief Elder Wolfclaw, we came only to gain access to Harry's vault, seeing as all of his vaults have been connected to vault one, and to get some gold for shopping. However, we do appreciate what you have done for us today. As a part veela, I understand the impact that this will have, seeing as veela are as unjustly treated as goblins are, even if not as openly. Very few veela, if any, choose to live in Britain because of its' laws labeling us as dark creatures with very few rights, most of the laws aiming at keeping us as sex slaves."

Harry gave Gabby a reassuring smile as the young girl blushed shyly and lowered her head. He gave her leg a light squeeze to try to comfort her. The young part veela seemed very shy at times, but also very observant and headstrong in her beliefs. "Chief Elder Wolfclaw, I believe that she has spoken for us both. She is shy, but the convictions she stated are the same as my own, and I will stand beside her for it."

"Very well, please follow me."

"Before we go, I do have some questions about the marriage contracts, as to how many of them, being hundreds of years old, have not yet been fulfilled, I already know the answer to that question when it comes to the founders, but the other families I fail to realize how this is possible," Harry said.

"That is a very good question, Lord Potter. Before I answer it, would you enlighten me to what you already know?" Wolfclaw peered intently at Harry, giving him his full attention, and giving Harry the feeling that the goblin could catch anything he said, and everything he didn't.

"Well then," said Harry. "I guess I will start with the most ancient house that had marriage contracts. This of course, would be the House of Peverell, which though very few know it, is more ancient than even the founders, although it did not become famous until the story of the Deathly Hallows. The father of the three brothers,

Cadmus, Antioch, and Ignotus entered into two marriage contracts for his two eldest sons Cadmus and Antioch. One of these was with Christopher Spinnet, his old childhood friend. The other, was made to Su Chen, a powerful wizarding general in the Chinese armies at the time. Cadmus Peverell's, the eldest brother, had an illegitimate heir. Cadmus Peverell was the receiver of the Resurrection stone, which was passed along through his line by his only known son, and was last known to be worn on a ring by the Gaunts. The son was not held to the contracts because his name had been changed to Gaunt, and he, although unknowingly, was the younger of two half-brothers. The Potters, though being the descendants of Ignotus Peverell, were not held to the contracts because they were not from the elder line. Now being the Potter and Slytherin heir, I am the heir of both lines, which in turn, makes me again the direct descendant of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw, who married. The fact is scarcely known that the daughter and only child of Godric Gryffindor and Rowena Ravenclaw married the heir of the Peverell line. For this reason alone, the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw names disappeared, and it was thought that their lines had died out. Next, I will go the House of Drakul. All I know of the origins of the contract is that the very first Lord Black, a Lucifer Black, saved the life of the current Lord Drakul, a one Octavius Drakul, from a pack of werewolves that had attacked the village. Even though the House of Drakul is more ancient than the founders, this occurred about one hundred years after the last of the founders died. By the time a daughter was born to the House of Black however, the House of Drakul had been cursed and became the part human race of vampires. Thus, the contract couldn't be fulfilled because it's not legal for vampires, who were their only known descendants and no longer fully human, to marry human witches. The contract remained, contrary to the many efforts of the ministry. Even the ministry could not cancel out a magically binding marriage contract of an ancient and noble house, let alone two."

Harry coughed and took a drink of pumpkin juice that had appeared on the table in front of him. Clearing his throat, he looked at Gabby, who was sitting beside him and apparently very interested in the history lesson that Harry was giving.

"Enjoying yourself, Gabby?" he asked.

"Very much so, Harry," she answered quickly. Smiling sweetly she said, "Please continue with the story."

Harry chuckled quietly, but nonetheless cleared his throat and continued.

"Now we get to the contract of the House of Gryffindor, which was made between Godric Gryffindor and the politically powerful House of Bones. Emir Bones entered into the contract with Godric Gryffindor, giving his house protection, as the House of Bones had, back then, never been truly powerful in combat magic. This also gave Godric a foothold in the wizengamot. Before Helga Hufflepuff cast a spell on her own bloodline, so that they would all be born as muggles until my mother, she entered into a contract with Lord Alexander Bell. The contract was made because they had cared for each other for several years, although Lord Bell had himself been forced into a marriage contract, and they wanted their lines to merge and always be allied. The spell Helga Hufflepuff cast on her line, as her daughter was in her womb, was only half of the reason that the contract was never fulfilled, since muggles could not legally be held to the contract. Now, Rowena Ravenclaw herself was a famous seer. But near the end of her life, she met a Lord Caradoc Lovegood, who was also a seer, but possesses more heavily the ability to sense magical signatures and also to be able hide them. Each wanting their lines to have the powerful divination abilities of the other, they agreed to enter into the contract, hoping that their families would remain allied forever. Finally, the last one I can answer for is the contract entered into by Salazar Slytherin himself. His reasons were actually quite simple, and of course prejudiced. Salazar had always openly despised any who were not purebloods and Lord Vincent Davis was a powerful ally who had always supported his views in the wizengamot. From his viewpoint, Salazar was more a master than a friend to Lord Davis, and he gladly accepted a merging of his own line with the prestigious House of Slytherin. I'll assume that being such an ancient race with magnificent records, the goblins know of the Founder's Prophecy? After all, it would explain a great deal of why the goblins have been treating me this way."

Wolfclaw's jaw dropped and he had a look of utmost shock on his face. Trying to speak, it took him several minutes of stammering before he could finally get the words from his mouth. Finally, nodding, he replied, "Indeed we do, Lord Potter. And you are the first wizard in over a thousand years, the only one besides Merlin and the founders themselves, to know of it. It seems that we goblins have assumed correctly, and for this I have never been gladder in

my two hundred thirty long years of life. However, what does that particular prophecy have to do with your explanations?"

Harry smiled mischievously at Wolfclaw, and sat quietly for a few minutes, letting the elder goblin sweat a bit. "That's quite simple, really. As you just said, the founders knew of Merlin's Prophecy. They also knew that the child would need many allies and they laid spells upon the contracts, so that they would not be known or able to be fulfilled until the all of their own lines merged."

Gabby looked at Harry in awe. "Harry, I've heard about spells that could do that, but it would take someone of Dumbledore's power to cast any of them," she said.

"That is true, Miss Delacour," Wolfclaw interjected. "Each of the founders easily had the amount of power that Dumbledore himself possesses. I believe that it is my turn to explain the rest of the contracts, which fortunately, are far more recent and easier to explain."

Glancing briefly at Harry and Gabby in order to make sure that he had their full and undivided attention, Wolfclaw began his own story.

"I believe that since they were made by your parents, I will begin with the contracts for the House of Potter. Your father, Lord James Potter, along with Arthur Weasley, the head of the House of Weasley, were both good friends and members of a secret order called the Order of the Phoenix, which was created during the reign of Grindelwald, and worked to bring down Dark Lords, and prevent their rise. Your father saw no benefit from this, except the union between his own house and the house of a dear friend. Arthur Weasley, however, has long endured poverty and a low social status. He saw this as a chance to give his newborn daughter, a Ginevra Molly Weasley, who is a year younger than you, a future outside of those troubles, also allying his house to the powerful Ancient and Noble House of Potter. Your mother Lily, however, did not know of this and entered into contract with her friend Jaimin Patil from the Indian embassy. The double contract was made between you and his twin daughters Padma Patil and Parvati Patil, both who are your age. They both agreed that the union would be a buffer for the alliance between your two families. The only reason your mother agreed to the double contract is that magical identical twins almost always share a powerful bond to each other. They are able to share

thoughts and feelings with each other, and your mother, Lily, and their father Jaimin, agreed that separating them would be cruel. As for the House of Black, Lord Arcturus Black entered into a double contract with a powerful neutral dark family headed by Lord Aiden Greengrass. The contract were to be between his own heir, and the first pair of unwed sisters born to the House of Greengrass. I believe a pair exists now and their names are Daphne Greengrass, who is your age, and her younger sister Astoria Greengrass, who is two years younger than you. Unlike many of his ancestors, Arcturus Black did not consider himself to be openly hostile against muggles and muggleborns. For this, he constantly argued with your godfather Sirius' parents, Orion and Walburga Black, and refused to give them the Head and Lady rings. When he noted that Sirius despised his parents and their beliefs as much, if not more than he did, Lord Arcturus was delighted, and named Sirius the heir to the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black. At age sixteen, however, young Sirius Black despised most of his family, save for his grandfather, and his aunt Andromeda, who had been disowned by the family for marrying a muggle. He was also good friends with his young cousin Nymphadora. The problems came to a peak when Sirius and his mother had an argument and she have blasted him off the family tapestry, but Arcturus, the current head of house refused to agree with her and formally disown him. When Sirius turned 17, Lord Arcturus Black made him the Head of House in order to bypass the problems with Walburga. Since Sirius was the only one named heir, Regulus could not fulfill the contract, and Sirius ran off and landed himself in Azkaban before he could do so. Normally, Regulus could have sued for the Head of House position, being Sirius' younger brother, but not only was Sirius Black never convicted, Regulus Black had died two years previous. Shortly before Lord Sirius was sent to Azkaban, he entered into a contract with Lord Richard Abbott, the head of a prominent, but dying ancient and noble family. In his own words, Sirius did this so that his parents would be turning in their graves."

"Wow," was all either Harry or Gabby could say.

"Indeed. That is all for the contracts that you already know of. There is, however, another one."

At this, Gabrielle looked just as confused as Harry, but Wolfclaw continued, undaunted. "Just this morning, it came to my attention that Lord Albus Wulfric Brian Dumbledore entered you into an

unbreakable marriage contract with the muggleborn Hermione Jane Granger. This was done sometime last week, and upon questioning Richard and Jane Granger, her parents, they stated that being new to our world, Dumbledore had explained her social and political standing to them. In short, by the time the meeting concluded, their views were thus. They knowingly entered their daughter into the contract in order to help her through the stigmatism of being muggleborn. Also, being muggles themselves, they thought it wise to ally themselves to such an ancient and powerful pureblood house."

If Harry had been expecting anything, this was definitely not it. "Dumbledore did what?" he roared, jumping to his feet. "That's not possible! I am an emancipated Head of House!"

"Lord Potter, at the time the contract was signed, you were not. Being an orphan, you were the magical ward of Albus Dumbledore," Wolfclaw replied quietly. Secretly, he was enjoying the rage that young Harry was showing towards the manipulative headmaster.

"That bastard! That manipulative old coot thinks he can get away with this? He has controlled my life for far too long, greater good my ass. I understand his views very well, and know that he has only good intentions, but he is meddling with peoples' lives. I'm not a pawn to be used in his schemes. I can't believe this. Hermione of all people. Before I came back, she was one of my best friends," Harry finished softly, sitting down as he said Hermione's name. He couldn't think of anything to say. With all of his occlumency skill, his fury had still overwhelmed him. He did love Hermione as a sister, but this was too much. "Wolfclaw, can we please continue to my vault now?"

Wolfclaw didn't answer. Instead, he simply got up and opened the door. Taking Gabby's hand softly, careful not to hurt her in his anger, Harry helped her up and wrapped his arm around her waist, squeezing her before they turned to follow Wolfclaw.

Strangely enough, Wolfclaw led them back towards the main lobby, where Harry and Gabrielle heard alarms going off. Raising his wand, Harry began to rush forward, but Wolfclaw grinned evilly and blocked Harry's path with his arm. "Do not worry about the alarms. It is a fail safe measure used to evacuate the building. We had to do that in order to access your vault."

As he spoke, Harry and Gabrielle saw three massive stone circles rise from the emblem in the middle of the main lobby, and they rose into the air spinning fast before one became the bottom, supporting the portal which formed between the three stone circles. Harry walked forward and inspected the runes covering the sides of the portal that the circles had formed, and gently shook his head in awe of the ancient and powerful magic. Thieves beware, indeed. Harry highly doubted that Merlin himself could access this vault without permission. The wards that the runes created alone would spell a very painful and excruciatingly long drawn out death for whoever tried and by the looks of it; the magic would force them to remain sane the entire time. Harry smiled at the ingenuity of the goblins.

"This is the first and only time we will be required to do this in order to key you to the ancient wards on your vault. From here on out, you and anyone with your permission, will be able to apparate or floo directly into your vault. Any unauthorized visitors, however unlikely it is that the very existence of the vault becomes known, will be in for a very nasty surprise." Harry and Wolfclaw both grinned evilly at this statement.

'Would it be too much for Voldemort to just prance into my vault? Nahh, that would make it too easy.' Harry thought to himself. Even if Voldemort still had his horcruxes and survived the wards as a spirit, his new body would still be destroyed and his master piece of his soul, and the vast majority of his power, would be trapped in Harry's vault.

"Follow me, please. Only I am able to do this until you are keyed into the wards, Lord Potter. This is the very first and our most ancient vault, entrusted to us by Merlin himself. In this vault, all of his worldly possessions have been left, and as such, it is the most heavily guarded vault in the world. Only the current Chief Elder is able to do this, not even Ragnok would survive," Wolfclaw told the firmly as he stepped into the portal, followed closely by Harry and Gabrielle.

Darkness seemed to consume them all as they stepped into the portal, that is, until Wolfclaw lit a torch from seemingly nowhere. "No magic in this corridor please, only goblin magic works here."

Nodding, Harry and Gabrielle continued following Wolfclaw. The corridor was dark, warm, and dry. Although it hadn't been opened in over a thousand years, the air was surprisingly fresh. Torches ran

the length of the walls, and lit up as they passed, and in between them, several suits of armor stood guard. After several twists and turns, they finally came to the vault door. Along the way they had passed by several other small corridors, leading off from the path they followed, and not surprisingly, glowing eyes and growls came from many of them. Still, Harry doubted that many would get past the pair black onyx gargoyles that guarded each corner of the corridors. Wolfclaw was correct to have them follow so closely, because if anyone had fallen off the correct path, they likely would have never been seen again, and only Wolfclaw was able to bypass the suits of armor and gargoyles along the way. He also disabled several traps that Harry, at full alert, hadn't noticed. The traps went from vanishing floors, to several stepping stones that made the only safe path in one corridor, 'less one would like to end up impaled by several poisoned spears and arrows, followed by a burst of fiendfyre', Wolfclaw grinningly announced.

Harry watched as Wolfclaw put his palm on the emblem in the center of the door, causing a panel on each side of the door to appear. Taking a knife from inside his vest, Wolfclaw cut his palm and dripped some of his blood onto the panel in front of him, before handing Harry the knife and motioning for him to do the same.

"As the guardian of the vault, only my blood can unseal it, and your blood must also be spilled on the other panel in front of you in order to key you to the vault's wards and traps. After you do this, all the traps and creatures guarding your vault will no longer hurt you, and if you come this way again, the path to get here will reveal itself. Also, as an added benefit, this will enable anyone with your permission to also bypass these protections. You must give this permission of your own free will, no potions or spells can force it from you, at least not without dire consequences once the thief gets here."

The moment Harry's blood hit the panel in front of him, his hand healed over instantly, and the door to his vault, which had been a bright silver material that Harry recognized as mythril, glowed blue, and Harry felt the weight of the wards from his vault, and all of his properties on him. Talk about heavy warding.

By the feel of it, Harry had a castle, no a palace, that was easily twice the size of Hogwarts, probably larger. And it had the most powerful wards Harry had ever felt. Muggle-repelling, unplottable,

notice-me-nots, invisibility wards, shock wards, flame wards, asphyxiation wards, stun wards, blindness and deafness wards, anti-apparition, anti-portkey, obliviation wards, and several layers of powerful death wards on the inside of the wards. The wards covered what appeared to be a large island, far to the north, hidden by layers of deep cold mists and many ancient and powerful spells. The outer layer was covered heavily with intent-based and identification and death wards. Basically, any who had ill intent would die instantly as soon as they touched the first ward, and any and all magical concealment, or imperious-like effects would be removed. Any intruders that continued onwards from there would be instantly paralyzed by the shock wards, and stunned before the wards apparated the intruder directly into a holding cell, deep underground. What was more brilliant is that so very few people knew of it, and Harry could choose who to allow to bypass his wards, and anyone who visited would forget the existence of the island unless Harry decided otherwise. Over all, the Isle of Avalon was impenetrable, and most now believed it to be a myth, even though it was once one of the two most famous places in the world, known to both the muggle and wizarding worlds.

The trick, as Merlin had told him, was bringing Avalon back to the mortal realm. Merlin had told him how to do that, of course, but it was going to be extremely difficult. At this point only Harry could see or get to Avalon since it was held in a powerful stasis spell that held it in a pocket of space and time created by Merlin in the darkness of Chaos itself. Chaos, as Merlin had explained it was nothing more or less than a deep unpenetrable darkness that simply existed. Time and space were merely tools used to control the realms which were created within the Chaos. On the outside of these realms, lived the divines, one of which had been Merlin himself once. In retrospect, Avalon was outside existence itself awaiting Harry's call, as only one with the blood of a divine had the power to transcend existence and summon it from the chaos.

When Harry came out of it, he noticed Gabby's eyes were wide and she had a stunned look on her face. "Did you feel it too Gabby?"

Gabby could only nod in reply, as she didn't seem to be able to speak at the moment.

Wolfclaw looked at Harry and Gabby happily. "Well, that settles it. Only the true heir of Emrys would be able to take control of the

wards that no doubt, you have both just felt. It is extremely rare that wards are tied to two people, although I believe the bond between the both of you is so close, and powerful, that she has indeed become the Lady Emrys. As such, she wields the same power over the wards that you do, Lord Emrys."

Harry frowned. As much as he hated formal titles, he would much rather be called Lord Potter, instead of Emrys. Harry was proud of his heritage, but he was born a Potter. It was his way of honoring his parents, and they, along with Merlin, had been proud of him for his choice when Merlin asked what title he would prefer to be called. "Please, sir, just Lord Potter if you must be formal."

"Very well. Now, in you go," Wolfclaw replied, gesturing for Harry and Gabby to enter the vault, which the door had suddenly disappeared from. "I will wait here for you both. For now, you two are the only ones able to enter the vault without suffering instant madness.

'Wow' was all Harry and Gabby could both think, as they soon found themselves gaping at the piles of gold and jewelry.

When Harry took a step forward, a parchment appeared in his hand, and looking it over, he and Gabby found that it detailed the layout and full contents of the his vaults. Currently he was standing in the main Emrys vault, and there were numerous doors leading to his other vaults, along with a massive library, that held well over 300,000 unique tomes and several others, an armory, a potions supply storage, which held several ingredients and potions under powerful stasis charms, many of which were created by Merlin himself.

Gabrielle, it seemed, was in love with a brilliant gold necklace. The chain itself was inlaid with silver and diamonds and interwove like three small ropes and it held a pendent. The pendent itself was of a weird jet black metal, as dark as the starless night. In the center of it was a large emerald, surrounded by seven small sapphires, each the precise shade of Gabby's eyes.

Harry noticed this, and smiled and nodded at Gabby, "If you want it, you have to let me put it on you."

Gabby squealed in delight and hurriedly grabbed the necklace and ran over to Harry, who put it on her. Blushing, she kissed Harry's cheek, causing it to burn before shying away quickly, her face turning a shade of red that would have made any Weasley proud. Harry was momentarily speechless.

"Oh, thank you, Harry! It's so wonderful. Thank you so much!"

"You are very welcome, Gabby. I'm just glad to have someone that I can spoil for once," Harry said before he walked up to the fountain in the center of the vault and removed the item there.

What Harry had come here for, besides gold, was the pulsating red and golden stone that he now held in his hand, which had emerald green inlay patterns of light, verifying the authenticity of the only true Sorcerer's Stone ever to be created. True, as Merlin had told him, Nicolas Flamel and Dumbledore did stumble onto the actual first of seven stages to the sorcerer's stone, which while it gave strength and produced the elixir of life, and of course turned any metal into gold, it was not the true elixir. The elixir that Flamel's stone produced had to be consumed constantly, in order to maintain your strength and immortality, but that was pretty much the limit for that first stage. Also the first stage only protected you from death caused by aging. The stone in Harry's hand, however, was the final and true stage of the Sorcerer's Stone. Unlike Flamel's stone, you merely had to consume its elixir once, and you would never die from natural causes and would be immune from any disease. Also, if you chose to counter its effects, all you had to do was will it to happen, and it would be nullified. It was a veritable fountain of youth. Unlike Flamel's stone, this one would also give you eternal youth if you wished it. It could freeze and unfreeze your body at whatever age you were concentrating on when you consumed the elixir, and also purified your magic, and magnified its intensity. One had to be very careful with that final aspect though. You didn't want to have more magic than you could safely control.

Gathering up several galleons, Harry placed them in a bottomless bag that he then charmed so that when needed, he could just pull the exact amount of galleons from the bag, drawing directly from his vault. Harry also noticed the Emrys Head of House ring. True, the ring that was currently on his finger worked, as it was given to him by Merlin, it did not have the true coat of arms on it and was only the heir ring.

The ring that Harry was now placing upon his finger had an emblem of a great black shield. It had a silver sword, burning with blue and white fire, stabbing down through the middle of it and the sword had a crown on top. On the left side of the sword, a royal phoenix spread its wings as if to fan the fire and a lion sat regally on the right side of the sword, with one paw reaching out towards it, claws extended. The basilisk at the bottom held the tip of the sword in its fangs, and the basilisk was in mid transformation.

The great drake. None had ever seen the species of royal dragon since the time of Merlin himself. The few that still existed lived far to the west, protecting the very essence of fire. Their hides were impenetrable to even the strongest of curses, and only a very powerful and well placed killing curse would stand a chance of taking it down. They lived for thousands of years, and breathed white hot flame, but could also breathe air thousands of degrees below freezing.

Placing it on his finger, Harry noticed the Lady of the House ring appear on Gabby's finger, and she looked admiringly at it before she smiled at him and ran up to him, giving him a hug that threatened to break his back.

Gabrielle looked up at Harry sweetly and gave him another kiss on the cheek, though this time, instead of moving away from him; she sighed contentedly and leaned into his chest. "It's beautiful, Harry. And it will show everyone that I will always be yours."

Looking down at Gabby, Harry kissed the top of her head before replying. "We are still young, Gabby. But we are going to have seven long years at Hogwarts to get to know each other. Now let's go shopping."

Seeing the look in Gabby's eyes, Harry took her hand and apparated them both directly to the front of Ollivander's, before she could react.

Ollivanders, Diagon Alley, London

Harry and Gabrielle were now standing in front of a narrow and shabby shop. Over the door, peeling gold letters read Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C. There was a single wand that

lay on a faded purple cushion in the window and as they steeped inside, a tinkling bell rang somewhere in the depths of the shop. It was a tiny little place, empty except for a single, spindly chair that Gabby sat on to wait her turn.

Harry felt strangely as though he had entered a very strict library, and swallowed a couple questions that had just occurred to him, being in the wand maker's shop again. Instead, Harry turned to look at the thousands of narrow boxes that were piled neatly right up to the ceiling. He wondered if Mr. Ollivander had made all those himself, or if his ancestors had. Mr. Ollivander's age alone was a mystery. Harry enjoyed the feeling of the back of his neck prickling from the magic that the very dust and silence in the shop seemed to tingle with. It was at once comforting, but also unnerving to those not used to the feeling.

"Good afternoon," said a soft voice.

Harry jumped. He had been preoccupied with his plan on what he wanted to do here. Gabrielle must have jumped, too, because there was a slight crunching noise and she got quickly off the spindly chair.

Mr. Ollivander was standing before them. The old man's wide, pale eyes were shining like moons through the shop.

"Hello," said Harry firmly.

"Ah yes," said Mr. Ollivander. "Yes, yes. I thought I'd be seeing you soon, Harry Potter." It didn't sound like a question to Harry. "You have your mother's eyes. It seems only yesterday that she was in here herself, buying her first wand. Ten and a quarter inches long, swishy, made of willow. It was a very nice wand for charm work."

Mr. Ollivander moved closer to Harry. Harry wished he would blink, because those silvery eyes always did creep him out a bit.

"Your father, on the other hand, favored a mahogany wand. Eleven inches, pliable, with a little more power and excellent for transfiguration. Well, I say your father favored it, although it's really the wand that chooses the wizard, of course."

Mr. Ollivander was by so close to Harry by this point that he and Harry were nearly nose to nose with each other. Harry could see himself reflected in those misty eyes.

"And that's where..."

Harry fought back a scowl as Mr. Ollivander touched his scar with a long, white finger.

"I'm sorry to say that I sold the wand that did that to you, Mr. Potter," he said softly. "Thirteen-and-a-half inches, yew, powerful. It was a very powerful wand, and in the wrong hands... well, if I had known before then what it was going out into the world to do..." He shook his head as he trailed off.

Harry had, of course, already known all of this. But that didn't make going through it again any more enjoyable.

Just then, Mr. Ollivander finally seemed to notice the other occupant of his little shop. "And who might you be, my dear? I don't believe that I have seen you or your family around here before."

"I'm Gabrielle Delacour. I'll be starting Hogwarts with Harry this year, though my family is from France," she answered the old wand maker.

"Well now, Miss Delacour shall we? I believe we should take care of you first. I daresay Mr. Potter here might be quite the tricky customer. Let me see." Mr. Ollivander said while pulling a long tape measure with silver markings out of his pocket. "Which is your wand arm, dear?"

"Well...I'm right handed," said Gabrielle slowly, looking unsure of herself. Harry caught her eye and gave her a reassuring smile. She visibly relaxed and mouthed "thank you" at Harry.

"Hold out your arm. That's it." He measure Gabby from shoulder to finger, then wrist to elbow, shoulder to floor, knee to armpit, and round her head.

As he measured, he said, "Every Ollivander wand has a powerful core of a powerful magical substance, Mr. Potter and Miss Delacour. I normally use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings of dragons. Although there have been a few rare

occurrences over the years, where I was forced to make new wands for customers, as I did not have any that were compatible with them. If either of you should require this, I will be most delighted, and you will find that I have every conceivable wand making material in my private workshop. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, dragons, or phoenixes are quite the same. I am proud of it and will work to continue that way. Of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard's wand."

Harry smirked as the measuring tape, which was by now working on its own, was measuring between Gabby's nostrils, causing the young girl's eyes to go wide, and Harry could plainly see the goose bumps on her arm. If it was anyone else, Harry would have been snickering at this, but he softly patted Gabby's shoulder to try to make her feel better.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ollivander was flitting around the shelves, taking down several boxes. "That will do," he said, and the tape measure crumpled into the floor. "Right then Miss Delacour. Try this one. Eight and a half inches. Maple and phoenix feather. Go ahead, just take it and give it a wave."

Gabrielle took the wand and waved it around a bit, but Mr. Ollivander snatched it out of her hand almost at once. After several minutes, the pile of tried and failed wands was mounting higher and higher on the spindly chair, and Mr. Ollivander and Harry both seemed to become happier with each failure.

"Well now. Tricky customers today, eh? Not to worry I can have you each a wand crafted by the end of the day. Of course you will both have to follow me to my workshop if you please. We will have to find out what materials suit each of you." Mr. Ollivander seemed positively delighted at the aspect of creating a couple specially made wands. Even Harry was letting his happiness show. He had intended for Gabby and himself to have custom wands made in the first place, and now he didn't even have to figure out how to broach the subject with Mr. Ollivander.

Harry and Gabrielle followed Mr. Ollivander through a hidden door in the back of his shop to a dark, musky room. Along the walls were materials of every conceivable kind, many of them Harry recognized to be exceedingly rare and very expensive.

"Now then, Miss Delacour, you will be first. First, place your hand on each of these woods, and pick out any that you can feel a warm tingling to your touch. That will be the wood that your wand is crafted from. Then, I would like you to close your eyes and feel out any material along these walls that feels right. After putting them into one of the three cauldrons that hold the sanctimonia quod vox magnification potion, they will become the liquid core to your wand. Normally, I would use a solid core, but liquid cores, especially made by using this exceedingly powerful and potent potion, that if I may add, is near impossible to brew and disastrous if you get it wrong, are far more potent and powerful than solid cores."

Gabby quickly obeyed Mr. Ollivander, hope and anxiousness shining in her face. Shortly after, she had two separate blanks of wood, and two different materials to form the core.

"Interesting. Yes, very interesting. This wood here is white birch and symbolizes love and desire. The secondary wood that you have chosen is blackthorn and symbolizes the power to overcome and influence others through the darkest of times. Now your first core material is not surprising. It is a single veela hair, which symbolizes lust, fierce protection, and healing. Your secondary core material, however, is far more rare and powerful. These young lady, are a pair of feathers, one from each wing of the Pegasus itself. It symbolizes purity and fiery independence. I daresay that your wand will be the most powerful wand that I myself have ever made, and it will be very difficult. It will be worth it though, and it will most likely be very suitable to every branch of magic, save for blood magic and dark magic. It will make casting even the most difficult of light magic spells a breeze for you, however."

Gabby's eyes shown with unshed tears of joy and she grinned happily at both Harry and Mr. Ollivander. Harry laughed. He was very happy for her.

"It does my old heart good to see that you are so happy, Miss Delacour," continued Mr. Ollivander. "I hope that you will be satisfied with your wand once my work is complete. It will be a masterpiece, I am sure. Now, please put your core materials in the cauldron nearest to you while I work on your wand."

Gabby did so. After nearly two hours, the wand was finally completed and it had a hole in the top for the core to be poured in.

Harry noticed that Mr. Ollivander had also drawn several intricate runes for power, healing, purity, and knowledge onto the handle of her wand. Showing it to Gabby, she squealed and said, "Oh, its beautiful!"

Silently, Harry agreed. Gabby's wand was ten and a quarter inches long, pure white with a comfortable black dragonhide grip that Mr. Ollivander had attached to the wand handle.

"Wonderful. It is coming along nicely," Mr. Ollivander muttered to himself, peering into the cauldron that Gabby had placed her core materials into. The potion, which had been blood red at first, was now silvery and clear. Mr. Ollivander raised his own wand and began a long stream of incantations that took him nearly another half hour to complete.

"Wow, it's a good thing we started so early, eh Gabby?" Harry said, and Gabby smiled in happy agreement. "What spell did you just cast, Mr. Ollivander?" he asked.

Mr. Ollivander peered at Harry closely, making Harry a bit uncomfortable again. "It is an ancient spell called the ritus of animus indulgeo. If you will notice, the potion is now gone, and the amount of liquid left should be just enough to fill the core of the wand. Also, this spell makes it impossible for the wand core to ever run out of magic, seeing as once the wand is bound, it replenishes its magic by drawing from the wizard or witch it is bound to, and from the ambient magic around the witch or wizard, so that the witch or wizard will not grow magically fatigued. It can also replenish the witch's or wizard's own magical core through the same process."

"Amazing," Harry said. If what Mr. Ollivander had said was true, then he and Gabby would each have a near endless supply of magic to use without tiring themselves out, not counting Harry's own abilities of course.

Sure enough, it was just as Mr. Ollivander had said as Harry saw him pour the silver clear liquid into the end of Gabby's wand and seal off the end. As soon as the core of the wand was filled, the entire potion had been used.

"Mr. Ollivander, why did you already have those three potions brewed? Have you been expecting somebody? I thought you said

that you hadn't done this in years?" Harry asked quickly. Constant vigilance had taught Harry to always be observant, even of the things that didn't always seem so obvious, except that in this case it was very obvious.

"A fair question, Mr. Potter," Mr. Ollivander answered. He seemed happy that Harry had pointed this out. "The potion in question can be held under stasis charm for over a hundred and thirty years. That is one thing that makes it so valuable. These three batches are the first and only three that I ever made and I made them when I was just a little older than you both are. I have held them in stasis ever since, hoping that one day I might be able to use them. What you are witnessing, Mr. Potter is my life's work. Today I will make my two masterpieces and forever cement myself as the greatest wand maker that ever lived. For this reason, your wands will be only one hundred galleons each, even though the materials alone will probably be worth millions of galleons a piece."

"Okay, thanks for explaining it to me. I was beginning to get concerned. After all, the dark times aren't that far behind us," Harry replied.

"Indeed, Mr. Potter," Mr. Ollivander said while looking apprehensively at Harry, as if sizing up the real reason for his query. "Now, if you would please repeat what Miss Delacour did to choose your wand materials, I can proceed to make the finest piece of craftsmanship the world has ever seen."

Harry laughed and Gabby giggled at Mr. Ollivander's apparent anxiousness. The old man had an unhealthy gleam in his eye that spoke clearly of his obsession with his craft and all at once convinced Harry of his honesty.

Not long after, Harry had two blanks of wood in his hands, along with three separate core materials. Checking what Harry had chosen, Mr. Ollivander looked close to having a heart attack as his broad smile seemed to stretch right off his face, and his breathing quickened up to a very unhealthy pace for such an old wizard.

"Are you alright, Mr. Ollivander?" Harry asked with a concerned look on his face.

Mr. Ollivander looked at Harry with a mad look in his eye, still grinning broadly and taking great huffs of breath. "Oh yes, Mr. Potter. The materials you have chosen are each unique and the only one's of their kind ever to be freely given. They have each been passed down through my family for hundreds, and a couple of them, almost fifteen hundred years," he finally managed to get out without stammering.

Harry was in awe. He could barely imagine what the materials in his hands really were.

"Well, Mr. Potter," Mr. Ollivander began. "The primary wood that you have chosen is a branch from the ancient ashen tree called the Yggrasil. It symbolizes the burden of the world that you carry, Harry. It stands for all those that depend on you, even as you would keep the darkness trapped forever. The secondary wood that you have chosen is a branch from the central trunk of Thor's Oak. As legend goes, when the god fell, he fused all of his powers into the tree. It symbolizes the inner turmoil that storms within each of us. It also symbolizes the fierce strength within you, waiting to be unleashed. The primary, balancing core material that you have chosen is a wing feather of one of the four Cherubim, which stand guard at the throne of the heavenly realm. This celestial being symbolizes the might of the four creature Lords that dwell at the four corners of the earth, and not once has ever come to this plane of existence. My ancestor once saved a mysterious stranger one day, and it is said that when he woke up the next morning, he found this feather was upon him before remembering the dream that told him what it was. This vial here contains freely given phoenix tears that was given to another of my ancestors by a very rare royal phoenix. To this day, the reason remains as much a mystery as the creatures themselves. It symbolizes life, regeneration, and resurrection. It is the symbol of fire and divinity. Finally, this vial contains the venomous blood of Samael, Demon Lord of Death and Chaos itself. This was given to my ancestor, Antioch Peverell, along with the Elder wand, by death. Death had been given the blood freely by his master and told to meet Antioch and his brothers at a certain bridge, and to give this to him. It symbolizes power over death, and the maddening descent into death and chaos. Your wand will easily be far more powerful than the elder wand, the most powerful wand to ever exist. I will be proud to be the crafter of such a masterpiece. If my assumptions are correct, this wand will be powerful in every branch of magic known

to us. The core materials themselves contradict each other, yet are balanced by a force that stands guard over all of magic. Brilliant!"

Mr. Ollivander was nearly skipping with glee as Harry placed the core materials in the next cauldron, and Mr. Ollivander repeated the process to create Harry's wand.

Nearly three hours later, Harry and Gabby were paying for their wands. Harry's wand was also pure white but had a black and gold hue to it, which was strangely beautiful. It was thirteen and a half inches and also had a black dragonhide grip. His wand had the same runes that Gabby's did, except that Mr. Ollivander had also added in the runes for love, pain, and courage to Harry's wand.

As Harry and Gabby took their wands, a golden glow filled the room, and an invisible wind blew strongly around them, ruffling their robes and hair.

"Very good. Now then, I don't know whether you two realized it or not, but when you placed your core materials in the potions, your blood was added. I can sense the bond between you, so I can safely say that the potion and spell that I cast made it impossible for any except you two to use these two wands. Anyone else that attempts to do so will find that they are mere sticks in their hands. Again, anyone that touches them with ill intent will be temporary drained of their magic, and the spells on the wands make them unbreakable," Mr. Ollivander said.

Gabby and Harry thanked him profusely for the wands, before Mr. Ollivander held up his hands to silence them.

"I have one more thing to give each of you," he said, handing them both a wand holster. "These wrist wand holsters are spelled so that only you can remove them from your wrist and they are keyed to your blood so that only you can see them and remove your wands from them. To access your wand, you merely have to flick your wrist, and your wand will appear in your hands. Now, I believe we can expect great things from you both. After all, He-who-must-not-be-named did great things. Terrible, yes, but great."

Taking the wand holsters and attaching them to their wrists, Harry and Gabby placed their new wands in the holsters before leaving the shop.

Room 12, Leaky Cauldron, London

Several hours later, Harry and Gabrielle collapsed on their bed after a long day of shopping. Fortunately, Harry had managed to get the essentials of what he would need before Gabby dragged him through nearly every shop in Diagon Alley, kissing him sweetly each time he got her another book or piece of jewelry. Before they came back though, they had a nice dinner at a small Italian restaurant in muggle London, after dropping off their purchases, of course.

They had both gotten a set of battle robes that were made of Hungarian Horntail dragonhide, interwoven and laced together with acromantula silk that itself was heavily enchanted with spells to give strength, speed, and extra protection to the wearer. There were also invisibility and disillusionment, and many other concealment charms that could be activated with a wave of the wand, making them invisible. They each had a set of gloves and boots made of the same material. The gloves had specially made pads that had the additional effect of gripping charms and charms that prevented the wearer from being disarmed in a duel. Their boots had charms applied to the specially made soles that included cushioning, agility, and silencing charms, so that the wearer could move silently. The entire works had been bathed in basilisk venom so that its' magic also imbued each item. Harry and Gabby had both grinned when the shop keeper told them of the anti-summoning and weather charms on all of their items, so that they could not be summoned and they would remain comfortable, no matter how hot, cold, or wet it was. And of course, they were fireproof, tried and true in blasts of dragonfire.

Harry himself had gotten magical contacts, even though he no longer needed them to see. They had every charm possible on them, and were impossible for someone looking at him to even notice. Before each contact was placed in his eye, Harry had three drops of veritaserum placed in each eye. It hurt a helluva lot, and Gabby burst into tears at Harry's cries of pain, even as he squeezed her hand to comfort her. The effect though was quite brilliant. Each contact alone was the equivalent, actually better, of Mad-Eye's magical eye, and had attached themselves to Harry's own eyes, bonding with them. The contacts could never be removed, but Harry could activate their effects and deactivate them at will. Otherwise, it was as if they were never there. By placing the veritaserum in his

eyes, he could see the truth of anyone that looked directly into his eyes, depending on what he saw them as. They were truly windows to the soul, and even though Harry was a master legilimens, not even a master occlumens could look into his eyes and lie to him.

Finally, Harry had gotten himself and Gabby a trunk. Only one trunk was needed because it had twenty-one different compartments and the main compartment was huge. The trunk had powerful wards that were keyed only to Harry and Gabby and could only be opened by them, or someone with their direct permission. The main compartment had a large workout area and weight gym in it. It also had a pool, a library, a large dungeon, several bedrooms and living areas, a potions lab, and even a dueling ring, and several storage areas, one of which was packed with portal stones. The stones, the shopkeeper had told them, were used to transport whoever held them to the portal room in the main compartment. Harry could give a stone to a person he trusted, and using a password, they could activate the stone. Harry and Gabby themselves would each use a stone when needed. What was more was that Harry brought out a small cube that he had taken from his vault. It was a room of requirement, the only other one ever created, and it was tied to the one that was hidden somewhere in Hogwarts. Harry found an empty stretch of wall at the end of the hallway and bound the room to it. At once, a door appeared in the wall, before quickly disappearing.

Following Gabby into the room, Harry sat in the chair at the desk, while Gabby sat on the edge of the bed before leaning back and sighing. Funnily enough, when she sat up, Gabby had an odd look on her face as she looked Harry in the eyes, before resting her eyes on her lap. Suddenly, a spot on her shoe seemed awfully interesting, and it worried Harry.

"Gabby, are you okay? I mean, I know that this is all so new, and..." Harry trailed off as Gabby grabbed his hand and pulled him to sit beside her, while putting a finger to his lips. Harry waited patiently, and fortunately didn't have to wait long for Gabby to answer his unspoken pleas.

"Harry, I want you to know something. I had a really wonderful day today," Gabby began, motioning for Harry to remain quiet as his mouth opened. "Even as prepared as I was, when we first bonded I was scared. I knew that, being a veela, my family would entrust me

to you. I'm sorry I had my doubts, but I don't regret anything. I'm happy with you, and I want you to know that."

Harry looked at her, and even their short time together was enough to show Harry the love in her eyes as she looked up at him. "I know that Gabby, and I feel the same way. I didn't expect any of this, but I'm happy with you, and I have no regrets. I have always wanted someone to love and protect, and you've given that to me. I never had a family, save for the Weasley's of course, but that was a different time. And this, me and you, it's different, special."

"Oh Harry!" Gabby squealed and tackled him backwards before he had a chance to react. Now Harry was lying on his back and Gabby was lying flat on top of him, both of their feet hanging off the edge of the bed.

Harry chuckled, "You know, you're really cute when you giggle like that."

This caused the Gabby, who was currently in a fit of very unladylike giggles, to blush madly and give him a peck on the cheek, before rolling halfway off him and leaning against him, with her head on his chest and one leg draped over him. Sighing contentedly she whispered, "Harry, I'll never leave your side, so please don't ever ask me to, not even to keep me safe. Please promise me this."

Harry looked down at her, as her head was tilted up at his, and frowned. "I don't intend to ever do that, Gabby. Call me selfish, but I'm quite happy to have you by my side, and I'd be jealous if you relied on someone else to protect you. But if it makes you feel any better, you have my word."

"Thank you, Harry. It does," Gabby said as she closed her eyes.

"Go ahead and get some rest, Gabby," Harry said. "I'm going to lay here until you fall asleep, but then I have to write a letter to Gringotts before I can go back to sleep with you."

"Goodnight, Mon chéri," Gabby answered tiredly.

Later that night, after Gabby had fallen asleep, Harry got up and wrote a letter to Gringotts. He sent a stone to Griphook and requested that everything in all of his vaults, except for the gold, be

placed and arranged in the mansion that was the main compartment of his trunk. Smiling, Harry gave an owl treat to Hedwig, which he had also bought earlier, and tied the letter to her leg before petting her head affectionately and sending her off. Finally, Harry was ready for bed, and curled up behind Gabby and held her, smiling at the contented sigh she let out as she cuddled closer to him.

Author's Notes:

Sorry about the long update people. I've been a bit busy the past couple weeks during final exams. Well, I don't have much to say at the end of this one, except that thank you for all your reviews, if it wasn't for you all, honestly, I'd have stopped and just kept the story in my head. Anyways please feel free to fire any and all questions at me.

How'd everyone like the twist I put on Ollivander's ancestry? Pay attention to the ring that Harry is only JUST NOW getting. Does it ring a bell anyone? Enjoy the clues that this chapter laid out to answer a question several have been asking me. It will be the last clue for a long time, and there will only be slight mysterious occurrences in the future, that bring Harry and Dumbledore back to thinking about it. I know that I never went into the details of Harry's training; I plan on giving this information out little by little as I go. As I am sure many of you know the story of the Grey Lady and the Bloody Baron, for my story it will be simply put that the marriage between the Grey Lady, Gryffindor's and Ravenclaw's daughter, and the Lord Peverell was kept secret from the arrogant and bloodthirsty baron. And for my own purposes... the wizengamot was created in the time of the founders.

So far many have guessed correctly that the royal phoenixes hold the center. They are by far the only creatures pure and powerful enough to wield that power in until Merlin's own heir returns. However, I'm not surprised that nobody has guessed that power yet. Yall are going to have to think deep to figure out the answer to that one. Remember, as I've given one clue to a few people. Love is the key, but it is not the power.

Why is it, that in every inspiring speech, the power of love is called upon in many forms. Hope. Courage. Honor. It causes many other emotions to be strengthened, but what is the connection? What is so uplifting that it gives strength to the feeble-hearted, and causes the

weak to be filled with power beyond our understanding in times of need? Well, I'll shut up for now, as I have made it plainly obvious, but probably also confused several people. Enjoy my newest riddle folks!

BTW, rest assured, this terrible power is far more effect, and isn't at all as corny as my riddle makes it seem. In essence, it's what each and every one of us, who can view ourselves standing proud in that final battle, would see ourselves fighting for, it binds the rest together, and when unleashed, is terrifying to behold.

Chapter 5: The Will of Sirius Black

Maximum Security Block, Azkaban, Somewhere in the Atlantic

It was shortly before nightfall when the boat arrived. This was the only way to get to the god forsaken island. Here, the Atlantic was harsh, and it never stopped storming. Even now, he could see the waves crashing against the rocks and see the lightning split the sky open, daring anyone to come to this forbidden place. Looking up, he saw the fortress that stood atop the hill amongst the rocks. Getting here was hard enough, but if one ever decided to be the first person in history to escape the Island of Sorrow, they would have to get past the Dementors, and the aurors. Not many, if any at all, could complete such a feat, especially without a wand. And if that didn't stop them, there was still the frigid, icy waters of the ocean that would freeze their very bones. Such a swim, hundreds of miles to shore would be impossible. Even the muggles knew not to come to this part of the ocean, their technology was said to go completely wacky here, even if such devices had been warded against magic. No, it was near impossible to come here without authorization and the proper transportation. As unplotable and warded as it was, even the muggles feared these seas. They called this area the Bermuda Triangle, not even knowing that wizards had set up wards that way over the centuries, with the forbidding prison of Azkaban at its center.

It had been a long time since he had come here, but he had business to attend to. Normally, goblins would never be seen in this dank, accursed place. Naturally, this was due to the fact that a lawful conviction of any prisoner for a life sentence in the prison or longer would result in the forfeit of any and all rights to whatever gold or titles the convicted had, and as such, the assets and all rights included would pass along to the heir of the accused, magical or otherwise. If however, there was no heir, the goblins would seize everything. It was this very reasoning that brought Griphook one of the most dreaded places in the world, the wizarding prison of Azkaban.

Few knew that he had been the account manager of the Black family for several years, and under the authority of the new Lord Potter, he now had even more reason to be here.

Disembarking the boat, Griphook had felt that familiar chill that had run down his spine so many years ago. As most did, he hated the

dementors of Azkaban. But strangely, he also pitied them. Goblins were a very long lived race, and Griphook had known the story of their curse since he was young. 'Oh, how the mighty have fallen. Pride comes before every fall, and it is most befitting that you pitiful creatures must survive off of what you once despised, feared by your own brethren,' the goblin thought to himself as the new curse breaker Bill Weasley stepped up beside him and cast a patronus charm to keep the dementors at bay.

"Griphook, I still don't understand why we are here. Everyone knows that this man is a convicted murderer, and his will should be void," Bill said as his sphinx patronus erupted from his wand, casting an immediate warmth on them both before it circled ahead of them, clearing the path to the auror outpost.

"Mr. Weasley, you are one of our brightest new curse breakers and you are here only for my protection. As such, I advise you to keep quiet about things that not only do not concern you, but you have no truthful and relevant facts regarding," Griphook snapped at the young wizard.

Seeing the man rear back in shock at his words, Griphook scowled. Perhaps his words had been a little too harsh, but the wizard should have kept his mouth shut. "Mr. Weasley, I understand your concern for this case. However, the murderer you speak of does not exist. The traitor that committed those murders committed one short of what the man we have come to see today was accused of. Sirius Black is innocent, and all of our tests and several powerful truth serums and spells have proved that fact beyond even the slightest shadow of a doubt. Your ministry sent an innocent man to prison without a trial, with the head of the wizengamot fully knowing that a small dose of veritaserum would have proved his innocence. Since then, the goblins have given copies of our records of the tests and his testimony to your ministry, but that corrupt fool Cornelius Fudge refuses to admit his mistakes."

Bill Weasley couldn't believe his ears. For the last decade, the wizarding world had cursed the mass murderer Sirius Black for betraying the Potters, and killing another of his childhood friends, Peter Pettigrew. None of what Griphook was saying made any sense. Bill had no doubts that Sirius had been sent to Azkaban without a trial, it sounded just like Fudge, but Griphook accused

Albus Dumbledore of being incompetent. How could Dumbledore have known if Sirius was innocent or not?

"Griphook, Sirius Black betrayed his best friends. Everyone knows that he's the reason they are dead. And what about Peter Pettigrew? He didn't fall dead of his own accord did he?" Bill asked, sure that the goblin wouldn't be able to avoid these facts.

Griphook turned his head towards the redhead just as they reached the auror outpost and glared at him. "Mr. Weasley, Sirius Black did nothing of the sort. The facts that the wizarding world claims to know are lies, covered up by the ministry even after the minister himself was given proof of it!" By now, Griphook was furious, he had always liked the young Sirius Black, and now, because of the foolish humans' belief in their corrupt ministry, the man had endured ten long years in this horrid place.

"As for Peter Pettigrew, he is alive. Gringotts records indicate this, though his vaults have not been touched in ten years. Sirius Black revealed that he is an unregistered rat animagus that should now be missing a single toe."

At the last statement, a chill ran down Bill's spine, before he brushed the thoughts aside. Surely it couldn't be, but even as he thought this, Bill Weasley had to admit to himself that he had often wondered how Scabbers, who by no means appeared magical at all, had lived so long. An ordinary rat could only last a few years, yet if Bill remembered correctly, he had found him not two weeks after Voldemort was destroyed ten years ago. Bill's scowl deepened, as a young child he had known that his parents were members of the Order of the Phoenix, and had seen Pettigrew a few times. Something had always seemed a bit off about that man. Bill silently vowed to himself that he would make a visit to the Burrow to either confirm, or deny his suspicions. Hopefully Ron would forgive him for it, the boy loved that rat.

"Still, where does Dumbledore come into this? He has been head of the wizengamot for several years, and he knew the Potters, Sirius, and Peter very well. How could he have known if Sirius was innocent or not?" Bill replied surprised at the vicious grin the Griphook was now displaying. The grin widened with each word that passed Bill's lips.

"Because Mr. Weasley, Dumbledore is the one who cast the Fidelius charm that hid the Potters, and as such, he had full knowledge of whom the secret keeper was. Now come along, we are on a tight time schedule," Griphook said nastily.

Bill couldn't believe his ears. Everything that Griphook had told him strangely made sense, but why would Dumbledore lie to the world like that, knowing the truth? Did he believe the Sirius murdered Peter, and deserved his fate? Or was there something else up the old man's sleeve? The Weasley's had always liked and trusted Dumbledore a great deal, so this was no small blow to that, but what could Dumbledore possibly have to gain by condemning an innocent man to such a fate?

Bill soon found himself walking down a corridor, following an auror and Griphook. He hadn't been paying attention as he was lost in his thoughts, and barely recognized, until now, how dark and dreary this place was. The small group passed many cells, and Bill could see many dementors patrolling the hallways and other corridors as they passed. Though the patroni cast by him and the auror kept them at bay, Bill still felt the horrible, ice cold chill run through his nerves, draining him of happiness.

'No wonder they call this place the Island of Sorrow' Bill thought to himself. He would much rather be in Egypt right now. At least the tombs didn't give him such dreadful feelings.

Bill noticed the unnerving, insane looks in the unhealthy, sunken eyes of infamous death eaters such as Bellatrix Lestrange, the Carrows twins, and Anton Dolohov as they pass by their small cells.

Here in the maximum security block, it was a who's who of You-Know-Who's best and deadliest. Each prisoner was subjected to the direct presence of the cursed guards of Azkaban several times each day, and before long, many of them went insane, haunted by memories of their own crimes and other horrible memories inflicted upon them in the course of their lives.

Bill wasn't surprised that Bellatrix didn't seem insane, even after more than a decade of imprisonment. She even taunted them as they went by and earned herself a stunner to the chest.

Seeing his look of surprise the auror turned to Bill and answered the unspoken question hanging in the air between them. "We sometimes have to stun her several times a week. She was always quite mad. I don't suppose there was enough sanity left by the time she came here. Well, that and the fact that she truly enjoyed the atrocities she committed have left very few memories that can bother such a disturbed mind."

Somehow, Bill wasn't all that surprised. Bellatrix was You-Know-Who's second in command, and a truly feared duelist. Anyone who had ever had the misfortune to meet the mad witch and lived to tell the tale, which was not many, could tell you how much glee it gave her to torture innocent souls. She got as much a kick out of it as her beloved, sick, twisted, and truly vile master she groveled at the feet of. Bill didn't even want to consider some of the stories he had heard to be true. How could anyone torture and kill a whole primary school of children and teachers, and rape several of the young boys, dead and alive? What kind of monster could relish such a memory?

Bill knew this story had to be true though, because during a major assault on Hogsmeade, she had brought such a young, muggle boy with her and led several aurors into a trap. Bellatrix had told the boy what was going to happen, and then silenced him before imperiousing him to stumble into the middle of Hogsmeade helpless. He appeared out of nowhere in the middle of the village beaten, raped, and with several cuts, bruises, and broken bones all over his body. Horrified, several people had screamed and ran to help him, but as a few of the aurors guarding the village approached him, Bellatrix's time delayed Bombarda Maxima curse took effect.

Bill shuddered at the memory. He had been with his parents in the village that day getting some candy. They were among the few that survived. Bill clung to his mother like his life depended on it when the explosion hit, signaling the beginning of the death eater's attack. That day, Bill saw death, torture, and the lowest depths of human cruelty as the death eaters struck innocents mercilessly. They didn't seem to care who you were. Innocent witches, wizard, aurors, and even several children were murdered in cold blood. All in all, only seven death eaters were captured, two of them dead. The body count for the light stood at twenty six aurors and one hundred seventeen non-combatants. For as long as he lived, Bill would never forget that day, or the look on the poor boy's face as he desperately

mouthed 'Stay Away!' at Bill when he started to run to him. He owed the boy his life.

It was that day that Bill Weasley gained the motivation to be the greatest curse breaker the world had ever seen. He would never allow another to suffer like that.

"Ah, here we are," the auror said, surprising Bill out of his thoughts. "May I introduce our esteemed and traitorous guest, notorious mass murderer, and best friend of James and Lily Potter, Sirius Orion Black? He's the strangest one I have seen so far. Black looks as mad as the rest of them, but he's always very calm and well behaved. Good luck trying to reach him; no one has been able to get a word out of him in several years."

"Very well," Griphook said. "Can my assistant and I have a bit of privacy with the prisoner?"

Startled by the reply, the auror quickly answered, "Of course! I will be just down the hallway checking on a few of the other prisoners. Mr. Weasley, have your patronus give me a message when you are both ready to depart. Sometimes, I wish I hadn't become an auror. I have always fought for what I believe is right, of course, but this really is a wretched place. I can't wait until the last day of my six month assignment."

Bill nodded at the auror and watched him walk away before he heard a voice speak calmly from the darkness, scaring the hell out of him. He normally paid more attention than he was, Bill scolded himself. 'This place must be getting to me more than I thought.'

"Griphook, old friend. It is very good to see you again after all these years. I wish that I could play a gracious host, but I fear this is not the best of circumstances," Sirius said with a grin. Sirius Black, Bill noted, had the faded features of a once proud, handsome man. The years hadn't been kind to him though, not in this accursed place. His dark and sunken eyes betrayed a haunted and pained look, and he was pale and very thin. Still, you could tell that he had once been a proud, intelligent, and handsome man.

"We are agreed, Lord Black," Griphook replied. "I have come to discuss your last will and testament, which you signed and filed on the 5th of November, 1981, shortly after your arrest. Under normal

circumstances, your will would become null and void, as you well know. Since however, we are executing your will while you still live, although incarcerated, we need your signature in order to proceed."

"I take it my godson has finally rejoined the magical world?" Sirius asked.

"That is correct," Griphook replied calmly. "Lord Harry Potter has laid claim on several different vaults and titles. Your godson is an amazing wizard, Lord Black."

"Where has he been all this time? As far as the wizarding world knew, he had disappeared deep into hiding?"

Griphook shifted uncomfortably. After all the years serving Lord Black and his family, he knew full well what he would think of Albus Dumbledore's actions. "Lord Dumbledore sent him to live with his only remaining relatives, a Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Dursley."

"What!" Sirius roared. "That manipulative bastard knows full well what James and Lily thought of the Dursley's. Greater good be damned! Did he ever realize what kind of miserable life he was condemning my godson to? I'll murder him! It was in their will! Harry had several other people to go to, and under no circumstances was Harry ever to go to the Dursley's. Dumbledore knows this; we were both there when the will was signed. They hate us! I can't even begin to imagine the lies they've told him about his own parents."

Griphook looked shocked. "I don't believe that is possible, Lord Black. I have seen the will with my own eyes and it specifically names Albus Dumbledore as the sole executor of the Potter's will and states quite clearly that the young Lord Potter was to live with his only living relatives until his 17th birthday, in order to maintain the blood wards that protect him."

"That is a lie!" growled Sirius. His eyes blazed with a burning fury that grew with each word that passed Griphook's lips. "You, what is your name?" he asked, pointing at Bill.

"Bill Weasley, sir. I am a curse breaker and warder for Gringotts," he answered quickly, wondering where this was going. Bill had a bad feeling about this. His family had always stood firm behind Albus

Dumbledore, yet this Sirius Black was accusing him of falsifying official documents in order to control Harry Potter's life.

"Do you have your wand? And a vial?"

Bill looked uneasy at the line of questioning. "Of course, but I can't give you either of them," Bill replied.

"There is no need. Are you willing to do the right thing, no matter what kind of damage it could do to your so called leader of the light?" Sirius asked. Looking into the young man's eyes, Sirius could see his warring emotions. Sirius remembered Arthur and Molly Weasley well, and he knew that the Weasley's were firmly loyal to Dumbledore, but this young man also looked like he knew a few things that he had opened his eyes, and was willing to see justice done.

"I am willing, Lord Black. What do you need?"

"I need you to take a memory from me. Please, don't fear getting close to the bars to get it. I am innocent after all, and I won't hurt you. I have fought against the dark and my own family's beliefs all of my life, and I would do anything in order to help my godson," Sirius was practically begging by now. "Please do this for me. I know how hard it must be to trust the words of a man sent to Azkaban for murder, but Harry is the only thing that I have left in my life, the only part of my greatest friends. He is the only one I have to live for."

After a moment's pause, Bill hesitated, carefully considering Sirius' words, before stepping forward to the cell and putting his wand to Sirius's temple. A second later, a silvery strand of memory emerged, hanging on the tip of his wand, and Bill placed it in a vial that he then replaced into a deep pocket on the inside of his robes.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Weasley," Sirius said calmly, reaching his hand out to shake Bill's.

Bill simply nodded as he took Sirius's hand, shaking it firmly.

"Lord Black, we at Gringotts will look over this memory, and if what you have said is true, there will be repercussions, I assure you," Griphook stated with a malicious grin at the thought of what they now had in their possession.

"Thank you, old friend. After all the years working together, I knew that I could count on you," Sirius replied sadly. "I wish that we could continue, but soon that choice will no longer be mine to make."

"You have been a goblin friend for many years, Lord Black. It has been an honor working with you." Griphook gave a short bow to Sirius and when he raised his head, Sirius had a look of shocked confusion at the glee on the goblin's face.

Sirius scowled at Griphook. "Are you that eager to be rid of me, Griphook?"

"Absolutely not, Lord Black," Griphook answered with a broad grin. "It so happens that Lord Potter has asked me to manage all of his vaults, except for the vault of Emrys of course."

"Really? That's bloody brilliant! Harry couldn't have asked for a goblin better suited for the job," Sirius said.

"Thank you, Lord Black. It means much to hear you say that," Griphook replied.

"Think nothing of it, Griphook. The compliment is well deserved. You may be greedy, but I am a very wealthy man for it." Sirius laughed at Griphook's scowl.

"Yes, time is galleons, of course," Griphook replied with a small smirk.

"O, and did you say the vault of Emrys a minute ago? As in Merlin Emrys?" Sirius asked.

"That is correct. Lord Potter is the sole heir of several noble and ancient families. The House of Emrys is among them and at this moment, I believe that your godson wears Merlin's own head of house ring."

Sirius was stunned. 'Harry is the bloody heir of Merlin! How is that possible? Merlin died without any children.' "Are you positive about this, Griphook?"

"One hundred percent, Lord Black. It is affirmative. Lord Potter underwent the bloodline and ability revelation rituals. I have it on good authority that the young Lord Potter wishes this fact to remain a closely guarded secret for as long as possible," Griphook answered firmly.

"Of course, I agree with him. You never know who could be looking to try to use such a thing against him."

"Well, as much as I enjoy our conversations, Lord Black, I must be going fairly soon. I have many other matters to attend to before the reading of your will tomorrow morning at 10 am."

"That is understandable. I enjoyed your visit, I don't get that many," Sirius said as he signed the paperwork so that Griphook and Bill could leave.

"It has been an honor, Lord Black," Griphook replied, bowing. "Hopefully one day we will meet again under better conditions that will be more profitable."

"Of course, but this old dog would have to sneak past the dementors first." Sirius chuckled as he watched them leave.

As they left, Bill looked over at Griphook as he helped the goblin back into the boat. "Griphook, is this 'Lord Potter' that you called Sirius Black's godson Harry Potter?"

"Indeed. They are one and the same. A very interesting young wiard, not unlike yourself. A little headstrong, but humble. Very bright, and with an amazing amount of talent."

'The Harry Potter, hmm? Things just got a bit more interesting.' Bill thought to himself as he watched Azkaban disappear into the darkness of the horizon.

Indeed, Padfoot was probably the only thing that had saved his sanity all these years. Dementors were blind and an animal's emotions were more primitive than a human's, so the dementors could barely sense Sirius when he was transformed. When they came near him, they merely assumed that the less complex emotions were simply caused by his growing madness, as so often happened with the other inmates. He had often thought of using his

Animagus form to escape, but until now, he had no idea where his godson was or what he was up to. But Harry was eleven now and would be attending Hogwarts shortly and in the morning, he would become Lord Black, and Sirius will have facilitated a few drastic changes as his last orders as Lord Black. 'I wish I could be there, or at least see a pensieve memory of it. Cissy is going to be fuming! As if I would ever allow the spawn of Malfoy to be Lord Black. O, I would so love to be there when my surprises are unveiled.'

Sighing, Sirius laid back on the cot and looked around. His six by eight foot cell was dark and musty, and the walls were cold and smooth. Along with an old moldy blanket and a rotting pillow, the only other thing in the cell besides him was the loo. The ceiling was so low that he could barely stand straight without banging his head.

Just like almost every other night since he had been in Azkaban, Sirius Black cried himself to sleep, thinking of the horrible night that took away his best friends and his life. His final thought as he went to sleep was 'I should have been there. I'll never be late again.'

Shortly after midnight, there was a flash of fire that illuminated the cell, and Sirius barely caught the second flash of fire as he woke groggily. He thought he had seen a black and gold phoenix with Lily's eyes disappear from sitting right beside him. Deciding that it was a hopeful dream, Sirius momentarily dismissed his suspicions until he caught sight of a letter and a gold and black phoenix feather under it.

Dear Padfoot,

I have been watching you. For ten years, you have been innocent. Ten long years you have carried the burden of guilt.

It is not your fault they died. James and Lily died, fighting for what they believed is just and right. Although you may believe different, things would be far worse if you had been there. Lily might have lived for a little while longer, but Harry would not have been given the power to vanquish Voldemort.

That night gave the wizarding world a reason to celebrate, a reason to hope, even as you mourned the deaths of your best friends. Take pride in the fact that in your godson, hope was born in the darkness. A light will soon illuminate the greatest depths the magic has to

reveal. All impossibilities shall soon be done by the blood of one of the nine divines. Dumbledore's time is at an end, and shortly he will step down and deliver us all into the hands of a much brighter light.

Believe this Padfoot, you must. A warrior has been born with great power, but he has known no love until recently. As one of the last links to the family that he lost, you must be strong in your guidance of him. His heart and soul are pure, but such power can have an awfully corrupting influence, especially on one so young. Take heart that your strength, wisdom, and friendship will be valued greatly by him. He has known a great deal of pain in his life, and only a father can influence the son to keep him from falling.

Stay strong, Padfoot. You will soon be free. On the next night that Moony howls, you must rejoin your godson.

Blazewing

P.S.

You did not make a mistake that night. Destiny cannot be denied.

Sirius was sobbing softly as he finished reading the letter and finally noticed a basket of meat pies, chicken, treacle tarts, and nut bread that had appeared. 'Who could possibly have sent all this? It had to have been one of our close friends, but why now, after all these years? No one else could have possibly known our secret.'

Whoever the letter and basket was from, Sirius vowed that he would do his best not to let Prongs and Lilyflower down. Silently, Sirius gazed up at the ceiling and thanked the mysterious Blazewing and began to promptly devour the food.

Unknown

Night had fallen and the air was cold and bitter as he swept north along the ridges. There was not a cloud in the starry sky as he soared high above the valleys, and in between the peaks of the tallest mountains, peaks and ridges that had long been hidden from sight.

Far below, ancient trees hundreds of feet tall spanned several miles, hiding the ruins that lay near the western coast. Under starry sky,

these ruins had been untouched by human hands for nearly a thousand years, long forgotten to history. This place was not important, at least not nearly as important as the few treasures entombed within. For this reason, he guarded this place, and flew over each night. The time was coming, he could feel it as his powerful wings took him deep into the ridges of the mountains.

Leaky Cauldron, Diagon Alley, London

Harry awoke with a start. He could vividly recall a strange dream, not unlike the few he had once had of Voldemort, but this one had been different somehow, yet try as he might, Harry could not remember any details of the dream and dismissed it for the time being. Harry grinned at the head of blonde hair that was tickling his bare chest. Gabby was still sleeping peacefully, with her head nuzzling close to his chest.

Harry couldn't believe his luck. Two weeks ago he never would have thought that he would be this happy, and yet the past few days with Gabrielle had been the best of his life. After situating all their new things into their trunk, they had given up shopping, except for Florean Fortescue's ice cream. They had spent the last few days exploring Diagon Alley, Knockturn Alley, and a little ways into muggle London together, just getting to know each other.

Gabby was shy, but could be very excitable. She had a brilliant mind that could easily rival Hermione's, but without the unnatural learning drive. She was also very headstrong and independent, but being the youngest sister all her life had given her a love of being spoiled and taken care of. She was very much the fiery princess that Harry would likely need to keep him under control and keep him firmly grounded. Gabrielle and Fleur had always been very close, but although Gabby definitely had Fleur's love of shopping, she did not have her sister's pompous attitude. Harry liked that, a lot.

A hand on his cheek brought Harry out of his thoughts with a jerk. Looking down, he saw Gabby's face turned up towards his, with her sweet, early morning smile on her face. Smiling back, Harry leaned up a little for a kiss, which Gabby happily obliged.

"Good morning, love," Harry whispered in her ear.

"Mmm, g'morning," Gabby purred back, straddling his waist and leaning all the way forward to nuzzle her head in his neck while he wrapped his arms around her.

Neither one of them said anything more for a few minutes, as this little cuddling act had become routine. For almost a quarter of an hour they were both quiet, just enjoying holding each other and being held.

As Harry laid, holding his Gabby, he wished that his life could always be this peaceful. Although, some points of his life were getting better every day. Just look at the night before for instance.

~Flashback~

Harry and Gabby sat in a private booth in the corner of an upper class French restaurant in downtown London.

Gabby was anxious, but not at all enjoying the thought of meeting their guests tonight. Harry had told her a few stories of the Dursley's already, and although she was a very friendly person, Gabrielle would have loved nothing more than to transfigure them into shiny white mice and set a few nifflers on them. She looked to her side worriedly at Harry. He seemed quiet, and she could understand why, but he had told her before they arrived that he had a few things in mind that would set the Dursley's straight. The memory of the look of mischief as Harry's dazzling emerald eyes shown with cruel excitement brought a warm smile to Gabby's face as she watched a bony woman with a giraffe's neck following a man that would likely fill three chairs when sitting. Behind them, a very large boy about hers and Harry's age followed his parents to their booth. All in all, Gabby could easily see the masks of fake pleasantness that hid the truly vile people that they were.

Harry, on the other hand, looked calm and strangely resigned. While going over his assets he had noticed something peculiar in one of the titles to a muggle business that his parents had bought. If Harry wasn't very much mistaken, Grunnings Drills was the firm that his Uncle Vernon worked for and Harry owned it! All these years, the Dursley's had complained about how much Harry cost to keep under their roof, even though they very rarely spent anything on him, Harry was the one paying for everything they owned in the first place. It was Harry's money that was paying Uncle Vernon's wages.

Now, as Harry sat quietly beside Gabby, waiting for the Dursleys to arrive, he contemplated what he was here to do and carefully hid his anxiousness at wanting to see the Dursleys' reaction when they realized who had brought them to this lavish restaurant and why. Before long, his thoughts were interrupted by a familiar rude grunt. Looking up, Harry realized that he had failed to notice the Dursleys' arrival.

"What are you doing here, boy?" Vernon asked gruffly with a scowl on his face. "And who is this little tramp beside you?"

Gabrielle's eyes flashed and her face grew dark as she fixed Vernon with a death glare. "How dare you!" she raged. "How can you think to judge me for something that you know nothing about? You vile, loathsome man. It is no wonder that Harry hates you so much, tonight I daresay that he will give you everything that you have coming. You better be thankful that it is not my say, or I'd turn you into a toad. You call me a tramp? Look at your son and what you have done to him. He is fat, lazy, and undisciplined. He is a bully. Is any of that poundage muscle or is it all blubber? If I didn't already know better I would say that he's as much a helpless hog as he looks. Tell me, do you honestly think that he won't rape any girl he wants? Do you think that he knows he can lie to you and get away with anything he wants? You are pathetic. And you, Petunia. Have you given up being nosy and trying to pry into every one of your neighbors' lives? You must really be miserable if their lives are more interesting to you than your own. What would you think if one of them walked in now and learned your deepest, darkest secret?"

Aunt Petunia had paled and her face turned white with horror, but Uncle Vernon, it seemed, was doing everything in his power to control his temper and hold his tongue. The effect on his face was obviously very funny to Harry and Gabby as they couldn't keep from snickering. They could both see his fury plainly as he fought to control his emotions. Vernon's face had went from normal to red, to purple, and back again several times before his logic won out.

"If you are on of them, then I daresay that your words aren't worth the breath you used to speak them, you little whore. I, on the other hand, have just learned that I will be getting a promotion at a very powerful firm. Why you are both sitting at the booth that we were led to is beyond me, but you can be sure that you will be forced to leave

once my boss arrives. He was once a captain in the royal navy, and he will not put up with any of your foolishness," Vernon replied carefully.

Harry was furious. He wouldn't allow anyone to dare speak to his Gabby like that, whore indeed! Harry opened his mouth to tell Uncle Vernon off, but his first words were cut short by the arrival of Uncle Vernon's boss.

"Why hello, Vernon," the man said as he shook Uncle Vernon's hand. "Is this your wife and son that you speak so fondly of?"

"Hello, Ted. Yes they are. This is my wife Petunia and our son Dudley," Vernon replied as Petunia and Dudley both shook Ted's hand.

"And who is this?" Ted asked, nodding towards Harry and Gabrielle.

"The boy is my nephew, and his friend decided to come along with him to deliver us a message. They were just leaving," Vernon finished fixing a stare on them both.

"No, they can stay! The more the merrier, I say. After all, family and friends are very important. Now before we begin, we have to wait for one more person to arrive. Now what are your names?" Ted asked while taking a seat beside Harry and reaching his hand out.

"Harry, sir. Harry Potter. This is my Lady, Gabrielle Delacour Potter," Harry answered while taking the offered hand and watching Ted go speechless with shock.

"O my! Harry Potter, you say? I would say that it is an honor to meet you, young sir, but I am just a muggle. Even so, even us muggles have loads to be thankful to you for, after all You-Know-Who would have kept killing us off until we were under wizarding rule. I did, of course, know that the Potter family owned most of Grunnings, but I did not dare to dream that I would be meeting you personally."

Looking at Vernon, Ted clapped him on the back. "Vernon, old boy! Why didn't you ever say anything about Harry? You should be proud to have him for a nephew. Most, if not every family in our world would pay every galleon in their vault to be in your shoes. Harry Potter! My wife and I, and probably dozens of other families have

wondered who was hiding him all these years. Bless you, Vernon! You have done the wizarding world a huge favor! Unfortunately it is not one that could ever be repaid in full, but I'd bet anything that you are probably going to end up being my boss pretty soon."

Harry looked at the delighted man's face. This was about the last thing he expected. The man clearly knew about the wizarding world, but how was a good question. "May I ask your name? And how do you know about magic?"

"Captain Ted Tonks at your service, Mr. Potter. My wife Andromeda and our daughter Nymphadora are both witches. If memory serves, your godfather, Sirius Black was Andromeda's cousin, so that makes us practically family."

"Wait, your wife is a Black?" Harry queried.

"She was, but Sirius's mother blasted her off the tapestry when she was disowned. Since then, it has been a matter of shame for the two ladies in my life," Ted replied as he bowed his head.

"Will you be at the will reading in the morning?"

Looking up, Ted nodded. "Yes, I will be there to support Andromeda and Nymphadora since they have been named in the will."

"Good," Harry said smiling.

Ted looked at Harry quizzically. "How is that such a good thing? Tomorrow morning is going to be devastating. The closest heir is the ponce son of Lucius Malfoy and Narcissa Malfoy. Narcissa is Andromeda's sister and even more of a prude than your aunt looks to be."

"My aunt is a prude alright," Harry confirmed laughing. "I am and have always been my aunt and uncle's deepest darkest secret. To have a wizard in the family is, in their opinion, a matter of the deepest shame. I can't recall all the beatings, bruises, and broken bones they have given me. You were wrong a few minutes ago, I will never allow Vernon to be promoted. As a matter of fact, the only reason I am still going to allow him to work for me, with a heavy raise, is to keep the Dursley's as far away from me as possible. As for tomorrow, I think that you can look forward to it. There may be a

few more surprises in store for you than you are aware of. For now though, we order."

Looking up, Ted and Vernon noticed the waiter bringing them a fine three hundred year old Scottish red wine on the rocks.

After their meal, Harry noticed all the Dursley's, especially Uncle Vernon, fixing him with stares, as if demanding to know why Harry had dared to bring them here, as they now knew that Harry owned Grunnings.

Harry bowed his head before raising his eyes to meet Uncle Vernon's. "You may as well speak your mind, Uncle Vernon," he said with a rough, hate filled voice.

"I was told I was here to be promoted, and now I have found out that was a lie. So why have you brought me here? You can't fire me. I have done nothing wrong, so I could sue you if you tried," Vernon said with a haughty manner.

"I can fire you, but I won't. It's simply not in my best interest or the best interest of my company. You are scum, a worthless piece of dirt as a human being, but as a director you do your job very well. I have looked over your file. Instead, what I am offering you is the chance to lead our expansion to our cousins across the Atlantic. All of your expenses including your flight, hotel, and new executive apartment in New York will be paid for by us. The only thing I ask in return is to never see your face again. Do we have a deal?"

Uncle Vernon obviously couldn't decide whether to be furious and insulted, or delighted. "Let me get this straight, boy," he replied. "You are willing to give me a raise, and more authority, and pay for all of our expenses if I take this offer? All of it just to make sure you never see us again?"

Harry smiled cruelly. "That about sums it up. I hate you more than you could ever hate me. For all the years of hell you put me through, I should run you off to Antarctica, or perhaps ruin the reputation that you have so carefully built with your lies and false pleasantness. I won't do either, though. By doing it this way, we both get what we want and never have to see each other again, and I don't have to put up with whatever stupid things you decide to do as revenge for me ruining your lives. I will warn you though. I normally believe in

doing the right thing, but just in case you ever forget our little chat here tonight and think about coming back, remember that if I find out, I will hunt you down and torture you all very slowly for the years of abuse you put me through. Then I will kill you, and believe me I can and will get away with it. Are we clear?"

Harry sat enjoying the effects that his words had on his Uncle. On one side, his dreams were coming true. He would have a very wealthy lifestyle and control the whole American expansion of Grunnings, and he would be rid of Harry forever. On the other hand, he hated the fact that Harry was the cause of it. He controlled his career, and his whole life at the moment. Then, if you please, the pathetic child dared to threaten him and his family! The nerve of his nephew! Harry watched as the vein in Uncle Vernon's forehead twitched and his beady little eyes fixed themselves on Harry.

"Crystal clear, boy. But make sure you don't change your mind. This may be the only thing we ever agree on."

"Don't worry," Harry replied as he stared down his Uncle. "I won't ever change my mind. And no matter what you do, you will have the job until the day you die or retire. I know how obsessed you are with your work so I know that even your lazy fat arse will make the company prosper. Now, since our meeting is over, you can all leave. I'll pick up the bill."

The Dursley's got up to go, leaving Harry and Gabrielle alone at the booth, as Mr. Tonks had left shortly after the meal so that Harry could have his chat with his family in private. Before they turned to leave, however, Vernon asked Harry, "So when do I begin? When do we leave for our new home?"

Smiling, Harry answered, "Your plane tickets will arrive in the mail tomorrow morning. As soon as you are in New York, you are to go to the address on this card," Harry replied, handing Uncle Vernon a business card. "You will start immediately the morning after you arrive."

"Good, the sooner the better. This country is going to the dogs anyways."

"Goodbye, Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia. And Dudley, they've already ruined you, so try not to land yourself in prison right off the bat. The

Americans are very prejudiced and they love to throw everyone in prison just to make money off of them. Honestly, all of their pathetic and hypocritical laws that I have heard about tend to be a bit ridiculous. Hell, they have laws telling people what they can and can't do with their own bodies. Nahh, I'd rather never go there. They create their own criminals out of otherwise decent people there." Harry watched as the Dursley's left, unsurprised at the look of horror on his cousin's face.

Satisfied, Harry glanced at Gabby, who seemed amused. "Harry, they are your family. You know that right?"

Harry scowled. "Well, they sure as hell never treated me like it. What are you trying to get at?"

Gabby remained silent for a moment, enjoying her game. Harry, on the other hand, was confused and looked at her questioningly, though she kept a mask of innocence on. At least until she smiled and said, "If my family had ever treated me like that, I would have hexed them until they thought they were little girls for the rest of their lives. But two pigs and an arse would have worked too."

Harry and Gabby both broke down laughing, making the couple at the table they were passing on their way out look curiously at them. "Two pigs? My uncle makes more of an arse of himself than my aunt does."

"But have you seen your aunt's face? It is hideous. And that neck. She was made to be a donkey."

"Then I guess it is too bad that we will never be able to make her the offer in person. I'm sure that she would be delighted for two freak children to give her four hooves and a couple ears that would be perfect for spying on her neighbors."

Gabby raised her eyebrows. "Freak children?"

Stopping and squeezing Gabby's hand just before he apparated them back to the Leaky Cauldron, Harry replied in a cold voice, "I meant us, Gabby. I was never Harry to them. Hell, until I was five I thought my name was either Freak or Boy."

Looking down, tears had welled up in Gabby's eyes as she stared at the ground in disbelief. "I'm sorry, it's just... I mean... I didn't..." she stuttered out through her tears as she looked at Harry in anguish.

Harry shushed her, gently placing his finger on her lips as he looked around to make sure nobody was observing them. "Don't worry. It's ok, Gabby." Holding her close and comforting her, Harry kissed her on the head and apparated them back to their room in the Leaky Cauldron with a silent pop.

Sitting down beside Gabby, he looked at her as she buried her head in his chest, sobbing. It felt a bit strange. Everything lately had been a bit new, and Harry was used to Hermione's hysterics, but he could honestly say that he had never felt that anyone cared as much about him as the beautiful blonde girl in his arms. Not even Hermione or Ron had been nearly this upset when he told them bits about how he had been treated by the Dursley's.

"Gabby, are you alright?," Harry asked worriedly.

Gabby had gone silent for a few moments as she sat leaning into Harry, lost in her thoughts. When Harry's voice brought her out of it, she looked into those magnificent emerald green eyes and saw the love and concern there. But why would he be concerned about her? It was because of what he had been forced to go through and endure that she was upset, other than that, she was fine.

"I'm fine. Why do you ask?"

Stroking his hand through her soft hair, Harry chose his words carefully before answering. "Well, for the last fifteen minutes you were sobbing into my chest, and I can understand where that came from. But then you got really quiet and had a weird look on your face."

"Oh. I was just thinking about what it would have been like if I didn't have my family. Being a veela, I can imagine what kind of cruel life I would have had being raised by another family, especially in Britain. But it's wrong for family to treat you that way. Why did they? I mean, you never hurt them did you?"

Harry sighed. Obviously he didn't enjoy the direction the conversation was turning. "I never hurt them."

Hearing the coldness in Harry's voice, Gabby shrank away from him at first, but he squeezed her hand and gave her a smile. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you, Gabby. Please don't ever be afraid of me. I would never do anything to hurt you."

Smiling, Gabrielle gave Harry a peck on the lips. "I know that, silly. I was just afraid that you got angry, thinking that I was accusing you of hurting them."

"No, that's not it. I have no problems hurting them, although that wouldn't be the right thing to do. Personally, I would find it very satisfying and worth the effort. I just don't like being on the subject much. The Dursley's hate me, and you, for what we are. They are terrified of magic. Quite frankly, they hate everything to do with magic and anything abnormal or what would seem out of the ordinary for muggles."

"I guess they had some bad experiences with wizards, didn't they? I mean, they must have a really good reason for hating magic, and those affiliated with it so much."

"No, Aunt Petunia was always jealous of my mum. She filled Uncle Vernon's head full of lies about magic, not that he would have needed much convincing. He's as narrow minded as she is. She just gave him a viable excuse and outlet to blame his life and everything else on when things don't tend to go his way. A bit sad really, and a bit pathetic. Overgrown whale can't even man up and face things the way they are. Coward is what he is. You saw how he licks the polished boots of anyone superior to him."

Yawning, Gabrielle leaned back on the bed, looking up at Harry, who turned sideways with his hand beside her waste looking at her. "My papa has many people under him that are like that. So I have seen it many, many times. Isn't it ironic to you that you hate him so, and yet your shoes are the ones that he has to kiss now? And you could have put him in his place, but you sent him away, with a promotion no less! Do you not think that your decision will inflate his ego even more?"

Tracing Gabby's lips with a finger, Harry leaned in and brushed her forehead with his lips before kissing her full on the lips. Harry knew full well that at their age, there was no way that their hormones were

raging, but as he breathed in her scent, the smell of wild blueberries and jasmine in her hair, and the faintest taste of strawberries mixed with something that he couldn't quite describe, something exquisite that was all Gabby, only her, he could have sworn a wizard's oath to lay down his wand forever and leave the wizarding world to the end that it brought upon itself, if only he could spirit her far away somewhere and never leave the moment behind.

Sadly, Harry knew that he couldn't do that. Harry was a warrior, and if Hermione had her say in it, he had a bit of a saving people thing going on. The truth was, Harry couldn't just leave it like that. It was his life, his destiny, if you believe in fate. True, Harry refused to let anyone, that included Fate, run his life. He made his own decisions. Harry was the one that had to follow through with everything he chose to do, nobody else was in his shoes. Still, Harry knew that what he wanted could not come true until Voldemort was dealt with permanently. It wouldn't be easy, but it would be the right path, the right thing to do. He didn't want his children to grow up in a world away from everyone else, or in a world full of fear of what Voldemort would do next.

His parents gave their lives so that he could live, and make a difference. They fought for what they believed in, and they died for it. Talking to them while in between, Harry had gotten to know them, and know that they had no regrets. From them, he learned that he had nothing to fear, especially not death. There would always be those like Voldemort, or worse. But there would also always be people like Harry, who had the courage to stand and fight for what they believed in and what was right, and lay down their lives if it came to it, in order to preserve a world and make it better for the one's they love.

Harry didn't want to fight, but he knew that at one point, he would have to. Sometimes a hero's job was just to rescue people, or show them the way, but sometimes, a hero's job was to stand tall, in front of the masses, at the front lines, and lead a world that had, by its own actions, led itself to the darkness, back to the light. Harry didn't like it, but for some reason, Fate had deemed that he be born for the job. The wizarding world had long seemed content to allow its problems to stew unattended, as long as it didn't effect them directly, but that very view had allowed Gellert Grindelwald, followed by Tom Riddle, and many others before them, to rise to power. Through the ages, the wizarding world never took the fight to the Dark Lords,

until the Dark Lords struck first, and in the open for the public to see. Only then would the Ministry of Magic strike back, and by then it was always too late. It was, and always had been up to powerful leaders of the light to strike down each consecutive Dark Lord, and now, it was Harry's turn. Voldemort, the most feared Dark Lord in a thousand years, the Heir of Salazar Slytherin himself, and Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived, the Heir of Merlin himself, in whose veins ran the blood of one of the nine divines, had a score to settle.

"Harry, hello? Are you listening?" Gabby was shaking Harry by the arm.

Being shook out of his thoughts, Harry looked at Gabby, and gave her a smile to comfort the worry that was clear in her eyes. "Im fine, sorry. I was lost in my thoughts for a moment. The answer to your question is no. There is no love lost between Uncle Vernon and I. We both know the reasons I sent them away, and he knows that it is nothing that he can or should be proud of. He also knows that if he causes any trouble, I will personally guarantee that if he survives, which is a long shot, that he will be on the streets for the rest of his miserable life."

"I guess you have a good point. You know, Sirius' will reading is in the morning. Don't you think we should be trying to get some sleep sometime before then?" Gabby said while looking Harry up and down while she got under the sheets and raised them up so that Harry could lie down beside her.

Chuckling, Harry crawled in beside her and tickled her sides, enjoying the squeals he got from her. "Stop it! We need some sleep," she said laughing as she nuzzled his neck.

"Okay, fine. Goodnite, Gabby." Harry shivered as she breathed on his neck. It tickled, but it felt good, and sent a shiver straight down his spine, and ran along every nerve ending in his body, making them tingle with warm fire. "Goodnight, love," he whispered in her ear.

"Goodnight, Mon chéri," Gabrielle answered back while trying to stifle a yawn.

~End Flashback~

"Gabby, we should be getting up, the will reading is in less than two hours. We should be getting ready so we can grab some breakfast before we go."

"Ten more minutes, please," Gabby pleaded. "I'm comfortable, and I don't want to get up just yet."

"Ok, sure. I'm comfortable too. I just thought that we could drop by and grab some books about broom crafting from the quidditch store. I have to pick something up from there anyways."

"We're going to make our own brooms?" Gabby squealed. "Hold on, what is it that you have to pick up? We didn't order anything from there that I can remember."

With a mischievous smile, Harry gave Gabrielle a peck on the lips and rolled them both over, with him now on top. "My dear, Gabby. It's a surprise! I owled for it a few nights ago just after you fell asleep."

"Oh, tell me what it is, please!" Gabby cried with desperation. Batting her eyelashes at him she gave him a wicked smile, "Come on, you know you want to," she said seductively.

The next thing Harry knew, as Gabby said these words, her aura that he had began to notice in the last few days went from a dazzling silver, to a glowing white that seemed to be pushing outwards at him. Strangely, he felt nothing. "Gabby, is that your veela allure?"

As sudden as it had happened, it stopped. Gabby's aura relapsed to its' normal state as her mouth dropped open in shock. "You're immune! Oh, I'm sorry Harry! Please, I wasn't trying to manipulate you, I just wanted to know what the surprise is. I'm not very good with surprises, the waiting drives me bonkers."

Harry laughed. "It's ok, Gabby. You're the one person that I would allow any control over me. Besides, I asked because your aura changed, and I was wondering what caused it. I've never seen the fabled veela allure up close, and yours seemed to be really powerful."

Getting up, Gabby began to get dressed, changing out of her nightgown and into some beautiful, baby blue robes, made from

acromantula silk. Gabrielle had spotted them a couple days before as she and Harry passed the window to a shop, and she had fallen in love with them. Harry, who always seemed so eager to surprise her, or just spoil her rotten, was very easy for her to convince to buy them for her. "What do you mean by my aura?"

Harry sat thoughtfully for a second, pulling up his black, dragonleather pants. "Your aura. Lately I guess I've been starting to get my abilities. Especially my aura reading and mage sight. Haven't you noticed how good my sense are now too? I can hear someone whisper from hundreds of feet away when I try. And my sense of smell. I'm just glad that I can focus and turn it off sometimes. My strength, speed, and stamina too. They are incredible, far beyond anything I have ever had before. Anyways, I like your aura. Its beautiful, bright, and silvery. Not like Dumbledore's. His is bright yellow and purple, a bit overwhelming to look at if you ask me. I can see the faint auras on magical objects and creatures too. Magic leaves a trace you know. It's all around us, and I can see it in the air, and in the ground. I can actually see and sense it enough that I can reach out my hand and feel it, and draw it into me. I've tried and done it. It was amazing. The raw power of magic, never having been channeled, was at my fingertips. I don't know if that makes me like one of the true sorcerers that lived so long ago, but it would make sense, I am their descendent. There's one more thing though. My aura, my magic. When I drew in the magic from around me, my own magic grew more powerful, and changed. My visible aura is usually emerald mixed with gold, but when I drew in the magic, it changed to a lightning blue and black."

"Wow," was all that Gabby could say as she listened to Harry. "All that is just fantastic, Harry. But you have to be careful. A lot of wizards and witches have been seduced by power before, and I couldn't bear to see that happen to you."

Stroking Gabby's cheek softly, Harry smiled at her. "It won't happen. I won't let it. I know I'm powerful, but I control my powers, not the other way around."

"I hope so," Gabby replied with a concerned look. "After all, very few wizards in history have had the power to sustain a visible aura. I doubt that anyone except Dumbledore, Grindelwald, and Voldemort have been able to do it in the last two hundred years. Except for you, I mean."

"I know. So, are you ready to go?"

"Yeah, I'm ready. Are you going to tell me what the surprise is?"

"Nope. You're just going to have to wait and see. By that, I mean that you won't find out until we get back from dinner tonight. I found a new restaurant that I think you will enjoy, after a movie too, if you want."

"Sure, I'd love that. But do I have to wait until then?"

"Yep."

"Damn. Oh well. A girl has to try doesn't she?"

Instead of answering, Harry just chuckled merrily and took Gabrielle softly around the waist. A silent 'pop' later, and they were gone.

Gringotts, Diagon Alley, London

An hour and a half later, Harry and Gabrielle found themselves being led to a private room, off the left hand side of the main hall at Gringotts.

Before they had arrived, Harry and Gabby stopped by a small breakfast parlor, and then headed to Quality Quidditch Supplies. Not long after, they emerged from the shop, with a long, wide package, that had been preshrunk and wrapped for them. Even after a few tries, Gabby was still persistent in trying to get a sneaky grip on one of the corners of the package, so that she could tear it a little to see what was inside, so Harry was forced to banish it to a small cubbyhole that he had made in a small room in their trunk. Gabby wasn't too happy about it, but in the end she resigned herself to having to wait and wonder what the surprise would be.

Once they entered Gringotts, Harry really shouldn't have been surprised, but none other than the headmaster Albus Dumbledore was there, obviously waiting on them.

"Harry, my boy," the wizened old headmaster began, eyes twinkling. Harry felt a slight nudge as something smoother along his mental

shields. "It is a distinct pleasure to see you both here today. I'll assume that you are both here for Sirius Black's will reading?"

"Yes, headmaster," Harry answered shortly as he raised his occlumency barriers up to full strength.

"Well then, shall we?" Dumbledore stepped aside and waved Harry and Gabrielle by, to a room off to the left side.

"I didn't know that you would be here, Sir."

"Yes, I happened to drop by and I heard some interesting news."

"What would that be, Sir?" Harry asked.

"It has come to my attention that your godfather, Sirius Black, has a will that will be read this morning, and, no doubt, you are named in it."

Harry looked quizzically at Dumbledore. "How is any of this your concern, Headmaster?"

"As your magical guardian, it is my duty to be here, Harry. I do feel that you being here is unnecessary, seeing as I can stand in for you, but since you are both already here, no harm done. But I do need to speak with you both when we are done here. Since you are both underage, I have managed to find a suitable wizarding family that you will be staying with that will take care of you both, while you are not at Hogwarts. I am sure that you will find the Weasley's to be very kind people, and they are delighted to take you both in. Molly will probably be horrified at how skinny you both are."

Harry was enraged, and Gabrielle no less. There were blue sparks of fire dancing along her now silvery hair, and all down her arms and chest.

"Headmaster, you are overstepping your boundaries. I am a Head of House, and as such, you have no authority over me outside of Hogwarts. We are perfectly happy and safe where we are, and when we decide to find a permanent place to stay, we already have several options open to us. The Weasley's are great people, but how can they afford two more children? Do you think that I haven't noticed the money you transferred from my trust account to theirs?"

It's only because of my respect for them, and my knowing that they would never accept such charity, that I allowed you to continue your transactions. I have plenty to spare, and I have no problem helping them, but next time it will be my choice to do it, not yours. Stop meddling in our affairs. I won't be your weapon Dumbledore. I will face Voldemort, but on my terms, not his, and not yours. We won't be staying with them, as much as I would like it. I will not tolerate your spying on and attempting to control my every move. Good day, Headmaster."

With that, Harry and Gabby both stormed by the stunned Headmaster, and headed for the room that they had been directed would be holding the will reading ceremony.

As they entered the room where the will would be read, Harry and Gabby both noticed, and both gave a small nod to, Ragnok and Griphook, who were at the head of a large, circular table that had chairs drawn up around the sides. The table's center had a pedestal that had been set on the floor and raised up through the whole in the center. On top of the pedestal was a crystal clear, blue orb.

"Harry, please sit here," Ragnok said as he ushered Harry and Gabrielle to two chairs right beside his own. "It is only fitting. The Head of House would normally take the seat of honor, so you should be as close to it as possible. Besides, I need to speak with you on a subject that came up very recently. It is very urgent and important that we deal with it as soon as time allows."

After helping Gabrielle to her seat, Harry took his own before turning to Ragnok with a questioning look. "What is it? Did something happen that I need to know about?"

"Indeed it did, Lord Potter. Before the others arrive please let me inform you that in occasions such as this, I must use formalities, as it shows respect for your family, your honor, and your position. We will discuss the matter after the will reading. I hope it does not offend you, Sir, but the others will be arriving shortly, and we do not have time to give the matter such thought and discussion as it will require."

Harry only nodded as he noticed a very familiar head of blonde hair, with a chin and nose stuck high in the air, enter the room. Draco Malfoy looked as arrogant as ever, followed in by his mother, who

looked just as haughty. She gave a short glance to Harry and Gabby before taking her seat. If Harry wasn't mistaken, she walked with her nose turned up as if the smell beneath her nose was unbearable, and Harry obviously couldn't blame her. Having a ponce for a son, and worse for a husband, should have given her a taste for the delightfully foul smells by now though. Harry did notice, though, the look of recognition in her eyes as she took in the sight of Harry and Gabby, before giving a quick, stinging glare to Gabby, who shrank back into Harry's side as Lucius Malfoy walked into the room and sat beside his wife. Noticing Harry and Gabrielle, Lucius Malfoy stared in cold, ruthless anger at Gabby, who was by now squeezing Harry's hand so hard that Harry was surprised it didn't break.

Squeezing her hand softly, Harry whispered in Gabby's ear. "It's okay, love. I remember what he did, and I promise I will never allow anyone to ever try that with you again. You have nothing to fear from him."

Fortunately, this seemed to cheer her up a little bit, as she gave him a tentative smile and loosened her grip on Harry's hand, but Harry was furious. "Lord Malfoy," he stated simply, his voice dripping with venom at every syllable.

"Do not speak to me child," Lucius spat back. "You and your pathetic tramp cost me thousands of galleons and a night in Azkaban. Do you not know what the punishment is for embarrassing such a powerful Lord? You should be thankful that I didn't press charges for the curse you shot at me, though far be it from me to know where you learned such powerful dark magic."

"You got no more or less than you deserved, you pathetic waste of a wizard. And I assure you that if you ever insult my lady again, or even think to, I will destroy you. Do you remember your miserable, late master, who tried to kill me? Come on, you know the one, just remember whose feet you kissed and groveled at for so many years. He couldn't kill me, so what makes you think that you would stand even the slightest chance? If I hear even one word come from your lips today I will invoke a blood war between our houses, and I will annihilate you and your family. I will wipe the once proud, but now wretched and twisted name of Malfoy from existence."

Lucius paled with rage, but kept silent. Draco, however, was stupid enough not to hold his tongue. "So you are the famous Harry Potter.

And this must be the little, French veela whore that landed my father in prison. It is a shame, Potter. You are stepping on the feet of the wrong wizarding family. My father is Lord Malfoy, and being the closest living heir, today I shall be named Lord Black. Not only can a current Head of House invoke a blood feud, but even if you managed it, being underage and all, you are the only Potter left. If you invoke a blood feud, we will have every right to kill you where you stand, and you wouldn't stand a chance. You haven't even began your first year at Hogwarts yet. And still, if you survived long enough to escape you would have two of the most powerful families after you. You wouldn't live another three days."

"Listen once, and listen well, Draco. Do you see these rings on my finger?" Harry raised his hand and let his Head of House rings flash to the Malfoys. "And did you notice the Black Head of House ring there also? I am Lord Black, you slimy weasel. As for you all, I could take you all at once while blinded, body binded, and with one finger to use my wand. So give me just one reason to, I would love to watch the goblins clean you up off the floor."

Draco glared, " You wouldn't-." But he was cut off from saying more by his father, who had his hand on his shoulder and seemed to be squeezing pretty hard, judging by the younger Malfoy's wince. "Now is not the time or place, Draco. Keep quiet. Lord Black, please excuse my outburst. We seemed to start off on the wrong foot entirely and I have spoken only to have my son hold his tongue. I wish no war with you. Perhaps, we might even be able to have you both to dinner before you go to Hogwarts?"

"Perhaps," Harry answered curtly. "I agree that perhaps we got off on the wrong foot, seeing as you were a roaring drunk, but let us not neglect the fact that you and your family have strong beliefs in blood purity and pureblood superiority, and I am against it. Blood does not determine a wizard's skill or power. In fact, the more magical blood is recycled through pureblood marriages, the less potent it becomes. To keep a wizarding line, an infusion powerful, new, pure, and unrecycled magical blood is needed. That is one reason muggleborns are needed, seeing as they are the first in their line to have magic. The magic in them is new, and extremely potent. Not to mention that without muggleborns, wizards would have died out long ago, or would have intermarried to the point where they were all born as squibs. Haven't you realized the no muggleborn has ever produced a squib? Squibs tend to come from the oldest of pureblood

ancestries. However, some of the most powerful wizards in the world are muggleborn. Even you would have to admit that. After all, you knew Tom Riddle in school, and you also knew the wizard he became. Lord Voldemort, one of the most powerful muggleborns in centuries."

"How do you know-?" Lucius began, but Harry cut him off.

"How I know is not important. But do see to it that you keep that diary that he gave you to yourself, at least until I come for it."

Eyes wide in shock, Lucius nodded in assurance that he would do exactly that.

"Now, that is better. Even enemies can remain civil at times," Ragnok said.

As Ragnok was speaking, Harry saw another familiar figure enter the room, looking a bit better than Harry was used to seeing him. In another few days though, when the full moon would shine brightly in the night sky of September 1st, Harry doubted that his health and appearance would remain in good shape. Harry gave Remus Lupin a smile as the man entered.

Lupin, who had no idea that Harry knew who he was, looked surprised. After all, He and Harry had never met, at least since he was a baby, but how could Harry possibly remember that?

Following Lupin into the room, and very nearly late, was Ted Tonks, leading a woman, no doubt his wife, and a young woman, who looked about 17 years of age.

"Harry," Ted exclaimed. "It is a pleasure to see you here. And you my lady, Gabrielle. May I introduce my wife Andromeda?" Mrs. Tonks, who looked much like Narcissa, powerful and aristocratic, but with a kind smile, reached her hand forward so that Harry could kiss her hand, and shook hands with Gabby. "And our beautiful daughter Nymphadora?"

"Don't call me Nymphadora. It's Tonks, just Tonks."

Patting her daughter shoulder as Tonks shook hands with both Harry and Gabrielle. "Dear daughter, why is it that you hate your name so? I think that it is a beautiful name. And it suits you."

Tonks scowled at her mother before starting to take her seat, but instead tripping on the leg of the chair and falling forward, face first into Harry's chest.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Wotcher, Harry. I'm fine. I'm used to it. I'm dead clumsy, always have been." she replied as she got up and fixed her robes. "I should thank you for breaking my fall though," she said sexily. "You are really cute, and if you were a few years older, I might be able to thank you properly."

Harry blushed brightly as Andromeda shrieked, "Nymphadora!"

Harry glanced at Gabby who, by the look of it, remembered the contract, and was obviously thinking along the same lines as him, especially if that mischievous grin was any sign. Gabby whispered in his ear. "Oh Tonks, I'm so sorry. I'm already taken, but my gorgeous lady Gabby agrees with me that you are, simply put, sexy as hell. It's a pity that you care about the age difference because we were thinking about your offer, and you do know that we have our own room and bed, right?"

The effect was instantaneous. Harry's face and neck were a brilliant red as he gave Tonks one of his most innocent smiles, and Gabby giggled hysterically at Tonks, who had gone as red as Harry, jaw dropped, speechless, and with her eyes popping out of their sockets. That wasn't all though as Tonks' hair and eyes were flashing through what had to be every color that Harry could imagine, including a few that he could swear that he had never seen before. The final straw, at least for Gabby, was the pumpkin juice that sprayed from Tonks' mouth and nostrils and straight at her mother's robes. Gabby couldn't take it anymore. She broke down into completely insane laughter and Harry had to hold onto her tightly to keep her from rolling around on the floor.

Mrs. Tonks, however, was not quite as pleased. "Now, really!" she huffed.

Mr. Tonks, on the other hand, seemed to find the flirting hilarious, maybe because he thought it was innocent fun, but Harry didn't know, maybe it was. But the wink that Tonks gave them both when her parents weren't looking suggested otherwise. Harry and Gabrielle both gulped. They weren't quite ready for that, yet.

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry was shocked to see three more people enter, who he had definitely not been expecting to see here today. Nudging Gabby gently in the arm, he got her attention and nodded over to the three readheads. Harry had no idea why, but Arthur, Molly, and Bill Weasley had all just arrived, filling the last three chairs that were right beside Harry and Gabby.

As he helped Mrs. Weasley to her seat, Mr. Weasley gave the Malfoys a cold look. "Lucius," was all he said to acknowledge them.

Mr. Malfoy glanced once at Harry, possibly thinking of responding to Mr. Weasley's less than polite greeting, but wisely decided to keep silent.

"Hello, how are you two doing? My name is Arthur Weasley."

Mr. Weasley regarded Harry and Gabby carefully. Reaching across, Harry offered his hand. "Nice to meet you, Sir. My name is Harry, Harry Potter. And this beautiful girl beside me is my Lady Gabrielle Delacour."

Mr. Weasley broke out in a broad grin. "Are you really? That's fascinating! My oldest son Bill, he's sitting next to my wife Molly, told me that you might be here today. But I had no idea that you would have such a lovely little Lady to accompany you." As Mr. Weasley was speaking, he gestured towards Mrs. Weasley and Bill, who both nodded and smiled.

Harry smirked as Gabby's face grew red. Gabby might have taken being called a 'little' Lady a bit offensive, but she seemed to be getting over her shyness a little, Harry noted as he watched in amusement as Gabby blushed furiously at the compliment.

"I guess I should thank you for the compliment, Mr. Weasley. I don't think my fair Gabrielle can speak yet." Trying to prove Harry wrong, Gabby gave him a look, but was only able to squeak out a retort.

"Tell me, Harry. Is it true that you have been living with muggles all these years? Bill told me a little of what he has heard. He's a curse breaker at Gringotts, and you are big news with the goblins at the moment."

"I've been living with my relatives, but I haven't enjoyed it much. They treated me like a house elf most of the time when they actually got around to stop pretending that I don't exist. Fortunately I won't have to put up with that anymore. Gabby and I are going to look over my properties next summer and pick one out for us."

Mr. Weasley paled a bit. "For both of you, did you say? Aren't you both a bit young?"

"You have a point. We are still trying to get used to it ourselves, but there are extenuating circumstances that have provided us with a valid and indisputable reason not to worry about our ages. We are taking it slow, of course. Don't worry about that contract you and my dad signed. Gabrielle and I already know about it, so we can deal with that when we get to it."

Mr. Weasley looked at his wife and gulped. "And what contract would that be, Harry dear."

"Now Molly, I don't think...", Mr. Weasley began, but the glare of cold anger by his wife stopped him cold, and he shut his mouth with a snap.

"Don't try to put it off, Arthur. Now Harry, what kind of trouble did my husband get himself into this time? It's never good, but I knew your father, and if James Potter was is on this too, then Merlin help us."

Suddenly, a speck on the table became very interesting to Harry, as he kept his head down just staring. He shouldn't have mentioned that marriage contract. He really liked Mr. Weasley and he was regretting getting him into trouble with Mrs. Weasley. They were like the family he never had before he came back, and Harry knew her temper as well as anyone. You did not want to cross Molly Weasley. And hopefully, Ginny wouldn't have her fangirl attitude towards him this time around. He knew she wanted to marry the Boy-Who-Lived ever since she was a little girl, but he had no idea what effect the knowledge of a marriage contract between them since before his

parents had died would have on her feelings and opinions about him.

"Harry, dear, it's okay to tell me. It's not you I will be angry with. But I need to know how long Arthur gets to sleep on the couch this time. But by the look in his eyes, and I know my husband, he will probably retreat to his shed for a month or so."

"Probably longer," Gabby giggled, smiling sweetly the whole time.

"What was that, dear?"

"Oh, it's nothing," Gabrielle replied. "But it really isn't something that we should talk about while we are here."

"Now that's a wonderful idea," Mr. Weasley interrupted.

"Hush, Arthur,"

"Yes, Love."

"So how about you both join us at the Burrow tonight for dinner and we can talk about it then? Would that work?"

Harry's head came up with a snap, his mouth watering. He loved Mrs. Weasley's cooking. Her meat pies, treacle tarts, and her fudge cakes enough to make him drool. The smile he wore was all the answer Mrs. Weasley needed.

"I'll take that as a yes, then?"

"Of course!" Harry and Gabby both replied excitedly.

"Ahh, children. If there's one thing all kids love to do, it's eat," Mrs. Weasley said softly. "Although, Harry, I do thinkg that I should warn you about our youngest. My daughter Ginny has been quite taken with you, at least the fairytales she has read of you, since she was very young."

"That's fine, Mrs. Weasley. I am sure that Gabby and I can handle Ginny."

Just then, the door to the room opened, and Ragnok reentered, followed by several armed goblins. "Now then people, we are ready to begin. All of you, please be seated and once I have your full attention, I will begin the reading of the will of Lord Sirius Orion Black.

As they all watched, Ragnok waved his hand towards the orb in the middle of the table, and the figure of Sirius rose into the air.

"Hey folks, if you are watching this, then I am still a guest of the dementors. It really is too bad that Crouch and Fudge still work for the ministry, eh? Maybe I can get a trial after somebody runs them off. I'd love to piss in the head Mugwump's face."

There was some odd noise from somewhere in the background.

Sirius turned his head, listening, and turned back to face them again. "Okay, getting back on subject. I, Lord Sirius (Yes Moony, I'm serious) Orion Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, being of sound mind and body (No Jokes Moony!)," Lupin leaned back easily in his chair with a grin. "Of my own free will, do ordain this to be my last will and testament to be read and carried out in the summer before my godson's first year at Hogwarts. I declare all other wills before it to be null and void. Whether I am currently dead or alive, and I'm probably still kicking, this will is to be executed at this time in its' fullest entirety by the goblins of Gringotts bank, London branch."

"First off, to my old friend Remus Lupin, a.k.a. Moony, I hereby give 75 million galleons and #12, Grimmauld Place under the condition that you chuck your filthy robes, buy yourself some new ones, and by Merlin, get yourself a witch! And there's no point complaining about it, Moony. It's not charity, and the galleons have already been transferred to your account. Somebody, please catch him."

Sure enough, Lupin was white with shock, and had tipped over in his chair. Fortunately, Mr. Tonks was able to catch him before he hit the ground, and helped him back to his seat.

"Secondly, to my dear cousin Cissy, I leave 5 million galleons and the house you grew up in, under the condition that you ask the new Lord Black to annul your marriage to that inbred ponce, Lucius, and

grant you a divorce. I know that you are still in the somewhere, Cissy. Under all those years of pain and abuse, you are still there, crying. Let the new Lord Black do this for you and take you under his wing, I beg you. If you fail to meet the conditions then you will be given 10 galleons and banished from the House of Black forever."

Draco's mother had a wierd look in her eyes as she glanced towards Harry. Maybe Harry was kidding himself, but he thought he saw hope there.

"As for the young Draco, I hereby banish you from the House of Black. May your feet never darken the doorstep again. I leave you nothing, except a sound piece of advice. Do your best not to follow in your father's footsteps. He is a cruel man that believes that money and blood purity grants him superiority over everyone else. You would do well do disregard his beliefs, and take heed to the lessons learned from his mistakes. Look to the past, and you will see the path that these actions lead to. Do what is right, and make a new name for yourself. Maybe one day, if you are smart, you will drag the name Malfoy from the pits, and make it something to be proud of again."

"Oh, and Lucius, did you honestly think that I would make YOUR spawn, Lord Black? Don't hoodwink yourself, I have never met the boy, and if he is anything like you, I can't take that risk."

Draco and Lucius both looked furious, but looking at Harry, wisely kept silent.

"Now to Arthur and Molly Weasley. You were a part of the Order, and were always good friends with the Potters and myself. Molly, I remember how you and Lily used to cook for everyone, and how you would both yell at us. Your poor husbands and I. Merlin, I used to dread those tempers. What fire you both had! Your tongues weren't exactly dull, you know. Arthur, I remember how James and I used to call you mad for your obsession with muggles, have you gotten over that yet? You are a brilliant wizard, and a good man, a good friend. You always worked your hardest to take care of your family, but those above you denied you your due. I honestly hope that you don't blame me for their deaths, I would never do anything to hurt James and Lily, and especially Harry. I would have died before I betrayed them. If you still believe in me, can you do me a favor, for old times sake? Take the 25 million galleons that I am giving you and keep an

eye out for a certain rat that is now missing a toe. Arthur, you know the one. He's still alive and out there."

The Weasley's were all three pale, and looking frantically at each other. Harry was able to catch what was on the forefronts of their minds using his passive Legilimency skills. "Mr Weasley, it's alright. What you are thinking is true, but you are safe. As long as he doesn't fear that he has been compromised, he will stay in disguise. Please don't do anything to him yet, and don't let him know that you are on to him. I have plans to deal with the rat soon enough."

Arthur looked carefully at Harry for a few moments before nodding his head. "I have faith in you, Harry. I am placing the welfare of my family in your hands. Please don't let me down."

"Don't worry Mr. Weasley, I won't. Just act as you normally do, and very soon he will be dealt with. I do want my Godfather out of prison, you know."

"One more thing, Arthur. I hope for your sake that Molly isn't in the room, but if she is, everyone cover your ears after I say what I have to say. I mean it." Arthur's eyes bugged out of his head and he gulped, but Mrs. Weasley had a furious, but cruelly mischievous grin plastered all over her. Everyone else just carefully scooted their chairs away. "You might not remember it, being as wasted as we were, but I was there when you and James signed that unbreakable marriage contract between Harry and Ginny. I know that you did it so that your little girl would be taken care of, and so that your families would always be joined, but think hard about it. Do you even know if they will be able to love each other? You have taken that choice away from them, just consider it."

Mr. Weasley, however, didn't look like he was able to consider much of anything as he cowered under Mrs. Weasley's anger.

"Arthur Weasley, how dare you!" she roared.

"-wobbles, please," he squeaked. Lucius and Draco were roaring with laughter.

"No, don't you dare," she yelled in cold fury.

"It isn't what you think, Love."

"Then what exactly is it, Arthur? Our daughter! Our only daughter! Our baby girl! And you signed her away not even months after she was born! You wait till we get home. We aren't finished, not by a long shot. So you can just sit there and dread what I am going to do to you. I have never been so ashamed in my entire life. Harry, dear, I am so sorry. I had no idea or I wouldn't have let them do it."

"It's fine, Mrs. Weasley. Gabrielle and I already knew about it. We found out a few weeks ago. We wanted to talk to you about it, but not here."

"Can we get back to the will, please?" Ragnok interrupted. Seeing that he once again had everyone's full attention, he waved his hand, unpausing the figure of Sirius.

"Now we get to my favorite cousin, Andromeda and her darling daughter Nymphadora. I never did agree with my mother and what she did to you. So... pause for dramatic effect." Everyone except Lucius and Draco laughed. "I hereby reinstate you both to the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, that is, if the new Lord Black agrees to it. I also give to each of you 100 million galleons."

"Finally, Harry. My godson. I have prayed every night since your parents died that I could have stopped it. I didn't betray them, but it may as well have been my fault. I convinced them to switch Secret Keepers to Peter, and I have no greater regrets than that. I don't know if you can, I wouldn't, but please try to find it in your heart to forgive me. I lost them that night too, so you are the only part of my best friend that I have left. You probably don't remember me, but I did, and still do love you, and I wish that I could be free so that I could take care of you like a good Godfather would do. Again, I am sorry. I was young and rash, just like your father, and when I found out what Peter had done, I went after him and cornered him. I should have been worried more about you then, but the betrayal was so fresh that I just went crazy. I know that there is nothing I can do to give back what my mistakes took from you, your parents and these years that I could have spent raising you as I should have and wished that I had done, but everything I have I give to you. I hereby give all other moneys, properties, assets and titles, including the title of Lord Black, with all authorities and responsibilities it holds, to my beloved Godson Harry James Potter. I wish that I could do more for you and I love you like my own son. I know that you will always

make your parents and I proud. Just one more thing before I sign off. Harry, do not trust Albus Dumbledore. He could have given proof that would have made my innocence loud and very clear. I fear that he has been planning something these many years, but I don't know what it is. He is a brilliant wizard, with his heart in the right place, but his methods are certainly questionable. Albus Dumbledore, as much as he would like you to believe otherwise, thinks only of the big picture. In it, we are merely pawns in the grander scheme of things he calls the greater good, and he will not hesitate to sacrifice each and every person to reach whatever his goals may be. And Harry, please uphold my decisions regarding Cissy, Andy, and Nymphadora. I know you don't have to, but it would mean a lot to this old dog if there was a little love and honor brought back into my family. Farewell, and I hope one day to meet the great wizard that I know you will become. This is Sirius Orion Black, signing off."

Harry leaned forward slightly, leaning over the table. Everyone's eyes were on him. For a few moments, the room was could hear the faint heartbeats of everyone in the room until the slight shuffling of the Malfoys leaving broke the silence.

"Lord Black," Ragnok started. "Will you reinstate Mrs. and Miss Tonks into the Black family."

Harry stared blankly at them both and nodded.

"Very well, please sign the forms, and press your family seal onto the documents and it will be done."

Taking a quill from Griphook, who had sat in on the will reading, Harry signed his name to the documents and dipped his ring in some ink before pressing the seal onto the bottom next to his signature.

"Now, Lord Black please say it out loud, so that magic can confirm it," Ragnok said.

Harry looked around the room. Tonks and her mother were both wide-eyed, but Mr. Tonks was grinning like a mad man. If Tonks wasn't careful she was going to fall flat on her back, the way her chair was tilted. Gabby was obviously happy. She was standing beside Harry, squeezing his hand firmly.

"Harry," she whispered. "Do it."

That was all Harry needed.

"I, Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, do reinstate Mrs. Andromeda Tonks-Black and Miss Nymphadora Tonks-Black back into the Black family."

The second the last word left Harry's mouth, a white flash of magic flared and a gold strand went out from Harry and connected to two silver strands that had come from Tonks' and her mother's chests. For a few seconds, everyone just stood there as the three caught their breaths.

Catching Harry's eye, Mrs. Tonks gave him a teary smile and mouthed thank you, just before a pink bullet nailed Harry in the chest, knocking him to the ground flat on his back.

"What the-," Harry started, but he was cut off by a squealing Tonks.

"Oh, Harry, thank you! You don't know how much this means to us," she said in between kissing him all over. Harry was bewildered, but Gabby has her hand over her mouth, and tears of myrth were coming from her eyes.

Getting up, Tonks reddened as she let Harry up and straightened herself out. "I'm sorry, Harry. I don't know what to say, I have no idea what came over me. It's just that, we can never repay you for this."

"It wasn't me," Harry replied. "You should thank Sirius."

"I know. But what you just did. It's like you made it to where it never happened. My mother never really speaks of it, and acts like it doesn't bother her that she was disowned, but I know her. It has been like a stain of dishonor, of shame, all these years. And you just erased it, like it never happened. We just can't thank you enough," Tonks said softly.

In tears, Tonks threw herself into Harry's arms and just stood there crying on him while he looked awkwardly at everyone else in the room, especially Gabby, but she looked at him as if to say 'I'm a girl, too. Do you honestly expect me to save you?' Giving in, Harry

shrugged and leaned up against the wall, with Tonks still attached and his arms around her.

"You're welcome," Harry answered quietly, patting Tonks reassuringly on the back. Looking at Mrs. Tonks and her husband beside her, smiled. "That goes for both of you. If there is ever anything else that I can do for you, owl me. You're family now."

Ragnok cleared his throat loudly, catching everyone by surprise. Obviously, Harry wasn't the only one who had failed to notice the goblins still in the room.

"Lor- Harry, are you forgetting one small detail?" he asked curtly.

Seeing looks of confusion all around the room, Ragnok continued. "There is the matter of the marriage contract that you are magically bound to fulfill to the first unwed daughter of the House of Black."

Tonks fainted dead away in Harry's arms, causing Harry to almost buckle under the unexpected weight.

Mrs. Tonks stared. "How... How is that possible?" she sputtered. "I know our family history as well as any Black, and there are no contracts left to be fulfilled by a daughter of Black."

Looking sternly at Mrs. Tonks, Ragnok replied. "You are mistaken, Mrs. Black. There is but one, an ancient contract between the Houses of Drakul and Black. Until now, either Drakul lacked a son, or Black lacked a daughter, but now we have both and they are magically bound to see the contract to fruition."

"That's not possible!" Mrs. Tonks spit out. "There are none from the House of Drakul left, they were all cursed to become vampires!"

"That is true, Mrs. Tonks," Ragnok answered quietly with a sneering grin. "However, young Harry is the only full human descendent of the House of Drakul. The ancient blood that has lain dormant for centuries has shown itself in him, and that is enough for magic and for Gringotts. Harry was just as surprised at the news at first as you are, but there is no way out of it. If there was, I am quite sure that he and the Lady Gabrielle would have found it by now, seeing as he is obligated to fulfill several unbreakable marriage contracts."

Mrs. Weasley turned on her husband, raw fiery anger roaring in her eyes once more. "Tell me, Arthur. Please tell me that you and James Potter were not foolish, no stupid, enough to make that contract of yours unbreakable."

Mr. Weasley paled and gave his wife an innocent look. "No, of course not-," he started before Mrs. Weasley cut him off.

"Arthur Weasley, don't you dare give me that look. You did didn't you! How could you let James Potter talk you into such a thing? An unbreakable marriage contract on our baby girl! You took away her very right to choose who she loves!" she roared while everyone else still in the room covered their ears.

"Actually, Love, I thought it would be a great idea," Mr. Weasley answered with a grin. "We were good friends with the Potters after all, and it would make sure that she was provided for and well taken care of. James just happened to agree, under the condition that for no reason would I tell Lily until James was ready."

Mrs. Weasley rounded on him. "And I bet that James was under a similar condition, Arthur?"

Mr. Weasley's eyes went wide and his mouth snapped shut. "I thought so," Mrs. Weasley said. "Well, Arthur, your intentions may have been honorable, but did you for once think of Ginny's feelings? Did you once consider that maybe she and Harry would not want each other?"

"Actually, Dear, the contract helps all that. The magic involved helps bring them together and make them more compatible for each other. And you know how she has felt about the Boy-Who-Lived all her life. She has been obsessed with marrying the boy since she was young," Mr. Weasley replied simply.

"In other words you took away her free will!" Mrs. Weasley shrieked. "And just because she's obsessed with a fairy tale, doesn't guarantee in any sense that she will love Harry! Now you will be the one to tell our daughter what you did and why. You can explain to her exactly what was running through your mind, besides firewhiskey, when you signed away her life!"

"Molly-," he started.

Mrs. Weasley rounded on him, veins pounding and her face red with rage. "Don't Molly me, Arthur. You don't have a choice in the matter because until you do, you will be sleeping on the couch, and once you do, your three months on the couch with no seconds for dinner will begin."

Mr. Weasley's froze in his spot instantly. He looked like a dog that had his favorite toy taken away, or a Malfoy that had been told that he was bankrupt.

"I think I'm letting you off pretty easily, Arthur. But woe to you when your daughter learns a few hexes, but since she doesn't, any that she can think of, I will do for her. You deserve it. Your daughter deserves every hex, jinx, curse, and any other payback that she gives you, and you are going to let her. And when she is done, you are going to hold her and tell her that you are sorry and that you love her."

Gabby grinned evilly. "Mrs. Weasley, can I give you a better idea? After all, We are all in this together. Me and Harry are bonded, and he has no choice but to fulfill every marriage contract that we are currently aware of."

Mrs. Weasley smiled softly at Gabby. "What are you thinking, dear?"

"Well," Gabrielle began with a devilish smile. "Since Harry is her husband-to-be, and as such it will be his job to protect her and defend her honor, how bout we let him cast the jinxes and curses for Ginny? Harry's got quite a bit of power, and he and I can give her a few, how should I say it, interesting ideas."

Grinning broadly, Mrs. Weasley gave Gabby and Harry both big hugs. "You know, I think that is just what my husband deserves. I might even let him stay off the couch once you are through with him. Before we continue, may I ask how many marriage contracts Harry has to fulfill? Covens aren't unheard of, but there hasn't been one in centuries. I just want to know how many other Ladies Harry will have."

Harry's face darkened. "Too many," he answered, face downcast.

"Wotcher, Harry," Tonks said. "Can you act a little excited, at least? Tons of guys would die to be in your position. Isn't it every guys wet dream to have more than one girl?"

"I'm eleven, Tonks," Harry replied shortly.

"What does that matter? You're still a bloke. Doesn't the idea turn you on in the faintest?"

"Of course it does," Harry spit out, growing redder by the second. "But that doesn't make it right."

Tonks and Gabby both sniggered. "Well, Harry, what if the girls want it that way? You are pretty cute, even though you are young. I think I can keep my hormones in check for a few years," Tonks said huskily, licking her lips. "Until you are ready, that is. That doesn't mean I'll keep my hands to myself though."

Harry watched Gabby and Tonks both walk sexily towards him, eyes bright, two sets of long legs and gorgeous swaying hips, "Oh gods."

Gabby and Tonks both giggled. "That goes for me too, Love." Gabrielle said as she wrapped her arms around him and planted a kiss firmly on his lips.

"Hey, I want one too!" Tonks shouted as she leapt forward to kiss Harry, but tripped on the end of her robe.

Fortunately Harry caught her before she hit the ground. "That's two I owe you, Loverboy," she said as she kissed him hard, moaning as her tongue swept across Harry's lips, begging entrance and getting it.

"Well now!" Mrs. Tonks exclaimed indignantly. "Have you no shame, Nymphadora?"

"Come on, Mother. You named me Nymph for a reason, didn't you? The way I have heard dad tell his navy mates, I'm not the only one in the house that likes to be kinky!"

Mrs. Tonks turned beet red as she gave her husband a furious glare.

"Come now, Andy," Mrs. Weasley said. "I remember you back in Hogwarts, and I have to say, your daughter is just like you were at that age. How about you all join us for dinner at the Burrow tonight? Some of the old crowd getting together to catch up. Harry and Gabrielle will be there too I expect. They have some business to take care of with Arthur. What do you say?"

Mrs. Tonks gave Mrs. Weasley a stern look and a smile. "Yes, I believe we can arrange that. I might even think of a punishment fit for my husband tonight as well."

"Great, we will be delighted to have more company!" Mrs. Weasley exclaimed.

Right about then Harry noticed Remus slipping out of the room. Just before he made it through the door Harry called out to him. "Mr. Lupin, won't you join us? You were one of my dad's and Sirius' best friends, I've heard."

"Oh Morgana, Remus I'm so sorry. I failed to notice you, but you would of course be most welcome to join us," Mrs. Weasley said.

"No, Molly I'm sorry," Lupin answered in a hurry. "I really must be going. I have to meet up with someone to arrange for some... ahh... conveniences."

Mrs. Weasley looked confused, as did everyone else in the room, save for Harry and Gabrielle.

"Mr. Lupin," Harry began, but Remus cut him off.

"Harry, please call me Remus."

"Well, Remus," Harry answered. "If you think that I am going to let you slip away before I get the chance to speak with you, you're mistaken. You were one of their best friends, and I know that you are a good man. So here's what we are going to do. We are going to take you shopping, just you, Gabrielle and I. And we are going to get you some decent robes for dinner tonight. While we are at it, we can stop and grab my trunk. I know the full moon is in a few days on the night of September 1st, and I happen to have the ingredients for the Wolfsbane potion in my trunk. I can make it for you. Or even better, I've been working on improving the potion with a couple extremely

rare ingredients that can halt the transformation completely and prevent it if taken in the week up to and including during the full moon."

Remus looked stunned. "How do you know about my condition? And how could you possibly know how to improve, or even brew that particular potion?"

"Promise to join us for dinner, and I may just have a story for you," Harry replied with a smirk.

Remus laughed. "You remind me of your father. You are a lot like him, and your mother as a matter of fact. You look just like your father did, except for your eyes. You've got-

"My mother's eyes. Yeah, I know. So will you come?"

"You've got yourself a wager, Harry," Remus replied with a chuckle.

"There's just one condition to hearing my story, though," Harry said.

Remus fixed him with a curious look. "Name it."

"Don't tell Albus Dumbledore anything I tell you. Give me your word on that."

"You have my word, Harry."

"I meant I want your word of honor, as the Marauder's Oath."

Remus' eyes went wide in shock, and his face went stark white as his knees collapsed and he leaned against the wall for support. "Obviously, Harry, you know a great deal more than I took you for. That secret has been kept for almost two decades. How do you know?"

"Do I have your Oath, Moony?" Harry asked.

Shaking from head to foot, Remus nodded and pointed his wand at his own heart. "I, Remus John Lupin, the Marauder known as Moony, do hereby give my Oath, swearing upon my life and magic, to Harry James Potter, son of Prongs, that I will disclose no information given to me by Harry from this point until he so releases me from my Oath,

to Albus Dumbledore, unless Harry gives me leave to of his own free will. I so swear it."

"I accept your Oath, Moony. So mote it be."

A flare of magic, symbolizing that the Oath had been confirmed and accepted by magic, flashed briefly between Harry and Remus, briefly connecting the two before flashing out of existence.

"Well that's that," Mr. Weasley said, clapping his hands together. "Shall we go now?"

Taking his cue, everyone began filing out. Harry, Gabby, and Remus to do some shopping and preparing. And the rest on their way to the Burrow.

"Bye Harry, Gabby! We'll see you there tonight!" Tonks said excitedly.

Gabby giggled and nudged Harry in the arm. "You bet we will, and I'll make Harry spruce himself up a bit for you and Ginny."

"Thanks, Gabby. Later!" Tonks waved as she followed her mother and the Weasley's down the opposite end of Diagon Alley.

"Lord Potter!" Ragnok's voice came from behind them.

Surprised, Harry and Gabrielle both turned to see Ragnok walking briskly up to them.

"Ahh, I'm glad that I caught up to you both. I need to speak with you about an important matter, regarding your parents' will."

"What happened?" Gabby asked. Harry looked at her surprised. It was oddly straightforward for the normally shy and quiet Gabrielle.

"You know, Love," Harry whispered quietly in her ear. "You've surprised me a lot lately. You normally just stay quiet in the background, unless we are shopping, but today you've been different. I hope that means you are getting more comfortable."

"I have. How couldn't I, especially when I have such a wonderful guy to take care of me and protect me?" Gabby whispered back.

Harry grinned. "You give me too much credit, Love. You have a wonderful mind, a pretty colorful personality, and a body that Morgana would give both her robes and her staff to have. I'm just glad to see you finally starting to enjoy yourself around people more."

Gabby blushed and pecked Harry on the lips, but Ragnok cleared his throat.

"As I was saying. We at Gringotts have recently been given evidence that Albus Dumbledore falsified your parents' will that he himself provided and executed shortly after their deaths. We have also been given a copy, via a memory, of your parents' true Will."

Harry's expression softened. "Is that it? Thanks, I thought it was something important."

Ragnok looked indignant. "How is this not important, Lord Potter? Albus Dumbledore broke several laws, both wizarding and goblin."

Harry smirked. "I am well aware of what Dumbledore did, and I already have plans on how to pay him back for it. No charges will be pressed, especially since I have him, quite literally, exactly where I want him."

"Are you positive, Lord Potter?" Ragnok asked, looking desperate for an excuse to get at the Headmaster.

"Quite," Harry replied curtly, but Gabby fixed him with a confused look. "Gabby, at Hogwarts I can keep an eye on him. Not to mention that he may be of some use to us, we are fighting on the same side, after all. And there is much that he may know, or can find out, that will be a great deal of help in the future. Besides, he doesn't know it yet, but at Hogwarts, I have the power, not him."

Catching on, Gabby's confused frown turned to a grin to match the one that Ragnok was now wearing.

"Indeed, Lord Potter! Very cunning! I must applaud you for your technique and wisdom to take heed the lessons the future may bring. However, I have a staff meeting, so I must be going quickly if I am to make it. I shall bid you both good day, Lord and Lady Potter."

"And to you," Gabby and Harry both replied before they turned and walked back out into Diagon Alley to meet back up with Remus and get ready for the night at the Burrow."

Author's Notes:

Sorry about the long update, peeps. My laptop crashed a while back, and I've been without internet ever since I stuck it in the shop. Anyways, I hope you all enjoy the next chapter. Don't worry, I plan on finishing this even if it kills me, especially since it took me so long to plan it all out. Anyways, all the way from my Blackberry, I hope you enjoyed the chapter and look forward to all those to come. Later!

Chapter 6: The Rat

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, Somewhere in Scotland

Albus Dumbledore was not enjoying his summer break. Not a month ago, he had fully expected to have Harry Potter finally return to the wizarding world and his first year of Hogwarts. Somehow, though, everything had fallen apart. Years of careful planning and machinations completely obliterated by the boy in very short order. Albus Dumbledore would not accept it. He would not allow the only chance the wizarding world had at vanquishing Voldemort to fall outside of his control, but it seemed pointless.

Just earlier that morning, shortly before the will reading of Sirius Black, the Headmaster had floored over to the Burrow and spoke with the Weasley's. Dumbledore explained to them about Harry and the young Gabrielle, and he also made it quite clear to them that the two children must be carefully taken care of and watched over. They must be guided so that they would remain steady in the light, and follow Dumbledore's wisdom.

Arthur and Molly both seemed overjoyed at the prospect. They both loved children, and plainly admitted that they would consider an honor of the highest regard to raise the son of two of their close friends, along with his bondmate. Arthur and Molly also argued heavily against taking any money for taking Harry and Gabrielle in, but after much persuasion, Albus was able to convince them that they already had enough financial troubles, and that without help, they would hardly be able to afford the two children. They both disliked charity very much, but in the end, they knew that it would be necessary if they were to be able to take proper care of Harry and Gabrielle.

After he left, Albus Dumbledore apparated straight to Gringotts, hoping to catch Harry and Gabrielle as they arrived to deliver the good news. His plans were finally starting to piece back together. By placing them with the Weasley's, Dumbledore would be sure that they would remain firmly in the light, and he would be able to keep a close eye on the two of them. After all, the Weasley's had trusted firmly in Dumbledore for several years, and they were among the biggest blood traitors known. It was perfect. They would instill into Harry, as they had with the rest of their children, the fierce belief in family, love, and doing what was right, and that would make it all the

easier for the Headmaster to guide Harry in what he must eventually do in order to destroy the final Horcrux, paving the way for Dumbledore to reassert himself as the leader of the light by vanquishing Voldemort once he was mortal again.

Along the path, there had been losses on both sides, and necessary sacrifices. Dumbledore regretted the Potter's fate, and the fate of Sirius Black. He knew, of course, that Peter Pettigrew was the only one the could have possibly betrayed the Potters, and it was a terrible price to pay for Dumbledore's mistake. Dumbledore should have known better. They had all known that there was a spy in their midst, but most had believed it to be Remus Lupin. Sadly, the Potters and Sirius Black, and even Dumbledore himself had made that fatal error of judgement against the man. Although Lupin had battled with his curse since he was a little boy, he had never once shown any anger or hostility towards anyone who misjudged him for it.

The fate of Sirius Black was also sealed that night. Nobody could know that Dumbledore was losing his touch and was misjudging people, which he had very rarely ever done before. Dumbledore prided himself on his legilimency skills that he deployed constantly in order to learn more about people, but he never once noticed the surefire signs and signals that, looking back, Dumbledore cursed himself for missing in the first place. If only he had paid attention, Peter Pettigrew had done many things that would have clearly labeled him as the spy. But it was too late by then to save Sirius, who had gone after Peter and cornered him in a muggle alley full of people. Knowing that he could not allow his misjudgements come to light, Dumbledore himself gave evidence that Sirius Black was the Potters' secret keeper, and Sirius was sent to Azkaban for life without even a trial. All was well, the old Headmaster thought. Sirius being imprisoned even gave him the opportunity to change the Potter will, and by doing so, make himself the magical guardian of Harry Potter. It enabled Dumbledore to place Harry with whoever he deemed fit, in order to reach his own goals, and protect Harry until the time was right. It would have been much more difficult if Sirius had raised the boy. Harry would have grown up knowing all about magic, and more than likely inheriting his father's and Sirius' skill at pranks and magic. Harry would have grown up like a pampered prince, but Dumbledore couldn't allow that. He needed the wounded hero, starved for love, that would gladly sacrifice everything, including himself, for his friends and those he loved.

He was there to see that his plans didn't fall apart completely. Dumbledore watched silently as Harry and Gabby entered Gringotts and walked towards him. They didn't look too happy to see him. It was hard to tell if he could ever salvage any sort of relationship with the boy, but he must try. The pain and anger that Harry directed at him made the old man regret doing some of the things that had to be done, but hadn't he tried to figure out another way? Hadn't he used all of his resources, exhausting every option, in order to find a way to save the boy? In a way, Albus saw himself in the boy, when he was young, and he found himself caring for Harry Potter more than he should. It was a horrific fate, that which Albus must guide the boy to eventually, he himself had given the date for Voldemort's return, but there was no way around it.

As he sat in his office later on, mulling over the less than satisfactory reactions and replies that Harry and Gabrielle had given him, Dumbledore cursed himself. He had made too many mistakes! He had allowed Harry to find out many things that should have been hidden from him until he was of age. Harry was too young, and not ready to bear the responsibilities of a Head of House, but there was nothing to be done now. Harry was now officially Lord Potter, and according to Dumbledore's information, he may be the Heir of more than one other house, but that was still unconfirmed. The goblins were very secretive lately when it came to Harry Potter, and only a very select few were privy to any information regarding him. 'What is going on there?' Dumbledore thought to himself.

Looking at his calendar, Dumbledore sighed. Tomorrow was September 1st, and perhaps a few of his questions would be answered at Platform 9 3/4. It was not easy to convince Cornelius to accompany him, but when he mentioned that it was by Harry's request, Fudge gave in. Now, all he had to do was wait, and wonder what Harry was planning next.

Diagon Alley, London

Harry and Gabrielle had spent the last several hours with Lupin in Diagon Alley. So far, they had managed to talk him into getting himself a small house in Hogsmeade, courtesy of the real estate agent that they had luckily run into. They had also convinced him to buy himself a new trunk and a broom, neither of which were nearly as shabby as the ones he already had. Before deciding to have

dinner at a small place they had found off to the side of the alley, Harry, Gabrielle, and Remus dropped by Madam Malkin's to have Remus fitted for some new robes.

Madam Malkin smiled at them as they reentered her shop later on, just after dinner. Remus was hanging back a bit, as Madam Malkin had shrieked at the sight of his robes when they had first entered earlier.

"Just a moment, Dears. I am just finishing up with another customer," she said sweetly as she handed a wrapped package to a witch that Harry and Gabby had, until then, failed to notice.

Narcissa Malfoy stood up and turned around to head out the door, but when her eyes focused on Harry, she gave a squeal and jumped back. "Lord Black! Oh, please excuse me. I must get these robes to my husband," she said hurriedly, trying to push past them to leave.

Harry didn't fail to notice the fear in her eyes, nor the small bruise on the side of her neck. "Narcissa, I have been waiting for your decision. Do you wish for me to annul your marriage and come under my protection?"

Narcissa's eyes flashed and she gave an uncertain look at Gabby, who simply clung to Harry's arm and watched as Remus checked his new robes before paying for them. "What makes you think that you can protect me? I saw the fear that my husband has of you, but if I left, he would hunt me down. You don't know what he and his friends are capable of. You don't know what I am capable of. Just look at the son I gave birth to. I have given him all the love and care possible, but he's even worse than his father, I fear. No, I can't take your offer. I've done horrible things since I have been married to that man. I don't deserve forgiveness."

"It's not your fault that your son is that way," Harry replied. "It is his own choice to follow in his father's footsteps and regardless of what you have done, the offer remains. It sounds like you have plenty of regrets, and you will have to live with those for the rest of your life, but if you are truly willing to change and try to do better, then you are worthy of forgiveness and a second chance. But you have to forgive yourself first, how else can anyone help you?"

Narcissa wiped a tear from her eye. "You remind me a lot of Sirius. He would say things like that. He always believed that we didn't have to live the way our parents did. Sirius believed that we could make the choice to turn away from it, and that we would be safe, but look at what happened to him. People are not willing to forget the past and forgive and when my son becomes the monster his father is, they will hate me even more for it, just for giving him birth."

"Cissy." Remus' voice startled both of them, causing Gabby to giggle.

Narcissa looked wide-eyed at Lupin. "Remus," she said slowly, as if not believing that he was there.

Remus, who had been quite happy during the last several hours, looked deeply upset now. "Cissy, what happened to you? The Cissy I knew had a fire in her that would never be put out. You would have never shown fear of weakness to anyone, much less allow them to control you."

Narcissa turned her face away. "I got married, Remus. I waited a long time for you to ask me, but you never did. My parent's ended up signing me away to Lucius Malfoy, and my wedding night is probably the only time he ever treated me like I mattered. After I gave him an heir, he started passing me around to all of his death eater buddies. He barely ever touches me other than to hit me anymore. Lucius has always preferred his witches young, normally around fifteen to seventeen. He usually keeps at least three to use as concubines at the manor. He beats them as often as he does me, just to show them what would happen if any of them tried to escape."

Remus looked furious. His features looked more wolfish now more than ever, and the growl that emanated from deep within his throat spoke his thoughts loud and clear. "Cissy, take Harry's offer, please," he begged her, growling through gritted teeth. "Don't keep putting yourself through it, we can help you. Please Cissy, let me protect you. I just got myself a new house, and you can stay with me. It's not much, but I will be there, and before long Sirius should be there too, according to Harry. I don't quite understand everything from the story that he told me, but he told me enough for me to place my complete faith in him, regardless of his age. Please let him do this for you. I won't let anything happen to you, if you will just trust me."

Narcissa was a mess. Madam Malkin had pulled a chair up and helped her into it. By now, all around her eyes were red and puffy, and she wiped her tears away with a white and pink flowered tissue. Looking up into Remus' eyes, she appeared to be very surprised. "Really? Sirius will be there? How? How can you still love me, after all these years? How can you, or anyone forgive me for the things that I've done?"

Remus sighed, getting on his knee next to her. Taking her hands in his, Remus looked up at her and replied. "I don't know how Harry plans on saving Sirius, but I believe in him. And I never stopped loving you, but I didn't think that it would be right for me to be selfish and have a life with you. Think what it would have been like, knowing my condition. I would have never been able to support you, and if we had ever had children, it would not have been fair for me to pass my curse onto them. Anyways, what is there to forgive? You blame yourself for the things that your husband and son have done, and will very likely do in the future. You can't blame yourself for who you are. Look at me, people have done that very thing to me most of my life, but I don't let it get to me. If I did, I would be miserable, blaming myself for something I have no control over. No, you are responsible for no one's choices and actions except for your own. There will always be those who look down upon you and blame you, but you must ignore them and rise above that. I have held myself back from many things that I have wished to do, only to prevent myself from causing problems with those around me, but that isn't necessarily the right thing. Only whenever you hold yourself back in order to do the right thing, and for the safety of others, as I have often been forced to do, can you truly see the prejudice for what it really is."

By the time Remus had finished speaking, Narcissa was in tears again and leaning forward into his shoulders. Catching Harry's eye, Remus nodded. "I think I finally won her over." Harry nodded.

Taking the cue, Harry stood directly in front of Narcissa and placed his hand on her shoulder. "I, Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, hereby annul the marriage of Narcissa Black, on the basis of violation of contract. I also hereby declare that the full wedding dowry paid to the House of Malfoy for said marriage, be returned in full within 72 hours, or face the punishment under wizarding law. I so swear it. So mote it be."

A second later, the flashes of magic confirmed it, and another two flashes went out from Narcissa and one from Harry, heading for both Lucius and Draco.

"Harry," Remus began. "Do you think that I could meet you both at the Burrow? I think that Cissy and I could use some time alone. I want to get her to our new home, and try to get her calmed down and comforted. It was a big deal, what she just went through."

"Of course," Gabby answered for Harry. Harry gave Gabby a look, but she smiled. "Come on, Harry. I know that blokes don't usually understand feelings and things like that so can you trust me on this?"

Harry looked startled. Taking her hand, he wrapped Gabby in a hug. "Love, I understand it full well, and I will always trust you with anything. I'm still getting used to you speaking up on some things, please forgive me for it. I don't mind, it was just unexpected, that's all."

Gabby blushed and settled herself into Harry's arms. "Well, Dear, shouldn't we get going now?"

Harry looked at his watch and smirked. "Probably. Are you sure about this, Remus?"

Remus, who hadn't been paying attention to them, looked up and nodded.

Right before Harry apparated himself and Gabrielle away, Gabby put her hand on Narcissa's shoulder and whispered something in her ear. Whatever it was seemed to comfort the older woman, and she appeared visibly less tense.

The Burrow, Ottery St. Catchpole

A few seconds and two silent pops later, Harry and Gabrielle appeared just outside the wards to the Burrow. Looking around, Harry noticed that they had landed next to a tumbledown garage in a small yard, and Harry and Gabby gazed at the Weasley's house. It looked as though it had once been a large stone pigpen, but extra rooms had been added here and there until it was several stories

high and so crooked it looked as though it were held up by magic (which, Harry reminded himself, it probably was). Four or five chimneys were perched on top of the red roof. A lopsided sign stuck in the ground near the entrance read, The Burrow and around the front door lay a jumble of rubber boots and a very rusty cauldron. Gabby watched in amusement as several fat brown chickens were pecking their way around the yard, while a few others were being chased by garden gnomes. The gnomes were small and leathery looking, with large, knobby, bald heads exactly like potatoes, laughing gleefully as they ran after the chickens.

They didn't get much more of a chance to look around, however as a redheaded figure that Harry recognized as Ron, approached them. Harry's heart leapt. It had been a long time since he had seen his best friend.

"Hello," Ron said. Ron looked just the same as he had when Harry had first met him. 'At least some things don't change' Harry thought to himself. Ron was tall, thin, and gangling, with freckles, big hands and feet, and a long nose. "You must be Harry. I'm Ron. Ron Weasley." He extended his hand towards Harry, who took it and shook firmly.

Looking at Gabby, Ron blushed. "And you are Gabrielle?"

"I am," Gabby replied, unphased by Ron's reaction to her. Harry on the other hand, recalled Ron's reactions to Fleur, and made a mental note to keep a very close eye on his old friend when Gabby was around. He might not mean to, but Ron couldn't always control himself, even when the veela allure was held to a minimum, as Gabby almost always preferred.

"Well, Mum told me to keep watch for both of you and another bloke named Remus Lupin," Ron said.

Not missing a beat, Harry replied, "He will be meeting us here. Something else came up that he had to take care of first."

Ron nodded. "Alright. You can both follow me in. Everyone is meeting in the kitchen. Mum has been cooking all day and it smells really good in there."

Ron turned and walked back into the house and Gabby, after a nervous glance at Harry, who nodded encouragingly, followed him in, keeping close to Harry's side. The kitchen was small and rather cramped. There was a scrubbed wooden table and chairs in the middle, and Harry sat down on the edge of his seat, with Gabby perched atop his lap, looking around.

Gabby looked curiously at the famous Weasley family clock. The clock was on the wall opposite them and had only one hand and no numbers at all. Written around the edge were things like Time to make tea, Time to feed the chickens, and You're late. Books were stacked three deep on the mantelpiece, books with titles like Charm Your Own Cheese, Enchantment in Baking, and One Minute Feasts - It's Magic! As Harry watched Gabby look around, the old radio next to the sink announced that coming up was "Witching Hour, with the popular singing sorceress, Celestina Warbeck."

Mrs. Weasley, on the other hand, was clattering around the kitchen in a frenzy. The kitchen did indeed smell heavenly as she was hurriedly finishing up several things for the feast. Mrs. Weasley seemed to have conjured up a sumptuous feast, that included many of Harry's favorite things. The small table was piled high with roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes, fries, bread rolls, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, and ketchup. And for desert, Mrs. Weasley had whipped up one of her mouth watering treacle tarts. Both Harry's and Gabby's mouths watered as they gazed at all the food. Harry was surprised that the table didn't give way under the weight of so much food, but it just creaked and held up steady.

Glancing quickly at Harry and Gabrielle, Mrs. Weasley smiled at the hungry looks in their eyes. At that moment there was a diversion in the form of a small, redheaded figure in a short, baby blue blouse and long, matching skirt, who appeared in the kitchen, gave a small squeal, and ran out again.

"Ginny," said Mrs. Weasley in an undertone to Harry. "My daughter. She's been talking about you all day, since her father told her what he had done. She's been confused ever since. She yelled at him for nearly two hours, but she has a real crush for you, and it is interfering with her feelings about being forced into it." Mrs. Weasley glanced over at Ron, who was coaxed a teary Ginny back into the kitchen. "Poor dear, she's been crying again."

Harry felt bad. He had always loved Ginny like a friend. Gabby gave him a look at moved from his lap to the chair next to him. "Harry," she whispered so that only he could hear her. "Do something. You are probably the only one who can make her feel any better."

Harry sighed, knowing that it was true. Getting up, Harry went to Ron and Ginny, and looking at Harry, Ron nodded and took the seat right beside Gabby and smiled at her. Gabby, looking uncomfortable, inched her chair slowly and smoothly away. Ginny, on the other hand, looked panicked as Harry took her hand and hugged her, whispering quietly into her ear. "Ginny, come on. It's okay. Come sit down with me so we can eat. We can talk this over later, or now if you want, but please don't be afraid of me. Whether we like it or not, we are in this together."

Ginny looked stricken at him. "Y-you don't like it? You're mad?"

Harry sighed and squeezed her gently. "No, I'm not mad. But I don't believe that anyone should be forced into something like this. I would rather get to know the real Ginny, the way you really are. And I would rather you get to know me and love me for who I am, not some fairy tale. Do you think we can give it a shot? I promise that if you decide not to, I will do everything in my power to break the contract, so that you won't be forced into something that you don't want to do."

"Really?" Ginny asked quietly, hope shining in her brown eyes as she looked up at Harry, clinging to him as if her life depended on it. "You would do that?"

Harry looked at her quizzically. "Do you want me to?"

Ginny had a confused look, as if she was warring with herself. "No! Well, I don't know. I would rather get to know you first. But I still don't want to be forced into it. If I do marry you, I want it to be because it's what I want, not because of some contract my dad signed."

Harry looked relieved, and he glanced over and Gabby, who was watching interestedly. Harry also noted, with a certain degree of anger, that Ron was doing everything he could in order to gain Gabby's attention, and had also scooted his chair closer to hers. "I would like that too, Ginny. But there is something that you have to

know. Gabby and I are bonded for life and this contract isn't the only one that I will be forced to fulfill. Of course, I would happily get to know you and love you for who you are, and marry you because of it, but could you do the same for me, knowing that I will be forced to have more than one other wife?"

Ginny looked downcast, her normally bright eyes dulled. "My mother already explained to me about it, and she also explained how you feel about it, and that there really isn't anything you can do to change it. If there's any chance that we can grow to love one another, and be together and happy, then I'll take that chance. After all, like my mother said, you aren't the type of person to mistreat one of your wives, or treat them any differently, just because you have so many. She told me that you would always be there for me and take care of me, and that you would always treat me equally and love me."

"And I will, Ginny. Please believe that," Harry replied.

For the first time that night, Ginny gave Harry a genuine smile. "I do, Harry."

"Well then," Harry chuckled. "Shall we take our seats and enjoy the dinner?"

Harry sat back down, and Ginny, after looking at Gabby, who nodded encouragingly, promptly took Gabby's spot on Harry's lap.

"Love," Harry whispered into Gabby's ear. "How about you trade places with us? I don't like the way Ron is acting with you, and I don't want you to continue feeling uncomfortable."

Gabby just shook her head and whispered back. "No, I have a present for him if he tries anything. Don't worry, Love. I can take care of myself, you know. But I'm glad to know that you care."

Smiling, Harry answered. "Of course, always and forever, Love." Turning, Harry gave Gabby a kiss on the cheek, and seeing Ginny's look, gave her one too. Ginny, being unused to it, blushed deep red, down to the roots of her hair, her face looking like the setting sun.

Ron, however, was not so pleased. In fact, he looked extremely jealous. "What are you doing kissing Gabby, Harry? You can't cheat on my sister! Did you see that mother? How can you allow that?"

Mrs. Weasley glanced up from the stove, over at Ron. "Ronald, that is none of your business, but suffice to say, Harry is engaged to marry both of them. It is not like he has much choice in the matter. For that matter, Ginny, have you thought of a suitable punishment for your father yet?"

"Yes, do tell, dear Ginny." Their heads turned towards Fred and George, who were just now entering the kitchen, followed by Tonks and her mother.

Ginny grinned evilly. "No. You'll just have to wait and see."

Just then, the twins caught sight of Harry, whose lap Ginny was still perched on.

"Blimey," said Fred. "Are you?"

"He is," said George. "Aren't you?" he added to Harry.

"What?" said Harry.

"Harry Potter," chorused the twins.

"Oh, him," said Harry. "I mean, yes, I am. How did you know?"

The twins both grinned. "Ginny has been talking about you all day. She's been really anxious, knowing that you were going to be here for dinner tonight," Fred answered.

"Yeah, she'll be wanting your autograph, Harry," George said with a grin. "But it looks like she's already got more than that from you."

The twins gawked at him, and Harry felt himself turning as red as Ginny was at the particular moment.

"Dear, Ginny," Fred began.

"What do you have up your sleeves for your father?" George asked.

Ginny gave them both a glare before turning her nose up. "Not telling," she replied, with an mischievous grin.

"Besides," Gabby interrupted, giggling. "Harry and I have a few ideas to give Ginny, and Harry gets to be the angel of vengeance."

"Oh, dear," Fred said.

"Merlin save us," George continued.

"From Harry Potter," Fred said.

"Who doesn't even know any magic yet!" they both finished, grinning broadly.

Mrs. Weasley glanced over at her sons. "Then tell me, Fred, George, why Lucius Malfoy was terrified of the boy."

Tonks, who was sitting in between Fred and George, laughed. "Yes, do tell. Imagine it, Lucius Malfoy, terrified of a defenseless, underage wizard, who doesn't even know any magic!"

As Tonks cracked up, Fred and George stared in awe at each other, and at Harry.

Looking at Harry, Fred asked, "Is he really?"

Not waiting for an answer, George replied. "Nahh, it can't be true."

"Oh, it's true all right. I saw it myself," Mr. Weasley said as he entered the kitchen, followed by Remus and Narcissa. Mr. Weasley looked better the worse for wear. He was a thin man, going bald, but the little hair he had was as red as any of his children's. Tonight, he was wearing long green robes, which were dusty and travel-worn.

Remus, on the other hand, no longer looked ill and exhausted, the way he normally did. Though

quite young, his light brown hair was still flecked with gray. Normally, he could be seen wearing an extremely shabby set of wizard's robes that had been darned in several places. But not tonight. Tonight, he was wearing brilliant, silver robes that highlight his wolfish features and his eyes quite well. Gabby had picked them out for him earlier

that day. The hem and trimming of the robes was pure black, and the robes themselves were made of a rare Peruvian silk. And on his arm, was Narcissa.

"Hey, I know who you are!" George yelled, pulling out his wand.

"Remus, that's Lucius Malfoy's wife! What is she doing here?" Fred asked, also pulling out his wand.

Narcissa took her seat next to Remus, and looked down at the table sadly. "I told you people would take it like this."

Remus patted her on the back and hugged her. "Now, now, Cissy. Give them a chance. How can they know what happened earlier? I'm sure that Harry and Gabrielle waited for us to tell them ourselves, after all, that would have been the polite thing to do."

"Fred, George, put your wands away this instant," Mrs. Weasley snarled.

The twins hastened to obey their furious mother. For a short, plump, kind-faced woman, it was remarkable how much

she looked like a saber-toothed tiger.

"That is no way to treat our guests," Percy said pompously, as he strode into the kitchen, last to arrive. He had a shiny, silver badge gleaming on his chest with the letter P on it.

"Why did you have to wear that thing, Percy?" Ginny asked.

The twins looked at Percy, and at his badge.

"Oh, are you a prefect, Percy?" said Fred, with an air of great surprise. "You should have said something, we had no idea."

"Hang on, I think I remember him saying something about it," said George. "Once -"

"Or twice -"

"A minute -"

"All summer -"

"Oh, shut up," said Percy as he took the last seat next to Bill, who had entered the kitchen unnoticed.

"Come now, dears. It is time to eat," Mrs. Weasley said fondly as she looked around at everyone.

Throughout dinner, there was chatter as everyone made casual conversations with each other. Gabby and Ginny were talking a mile a minute, Harry noted. The pair looked as if they would end up being great friends. Mr. Weasley, however, kept glancing nervously back and forth between the pair and Harry. Catching his eye, Harry smirked.

Mr. Weasley leaned over towards Harry. "Harry, do you know what my daughter has in mind to do with me?"

Harry looked at him. "No, I don't have any idea, yet. Gabby and Ginny seem to be pretty amused by their ideas though. I'd watch out if I were you."

Mr. Weasley went red and Harry grinned. Harry had overheard a few of their ideas, but little did they or Mr. Weasley know, Harry had already implemented a few of the more comical ones.

"That's right, Mister," Gabby said as she grinned at Harry. "You better keep your mouth shut."

"Yes, Love," Harry replied, leaning back in his chair with Ginny still on his lap. He was going to enjoy this.

As Harry watched Mr. Weasley gather his dishes to get up, Harry counted down to himself. '3... 2... 1... ahh.'

Harry, and the rest of the people in the kitchen, watched the transformations as Mr. Weasley was petrified, and literally anchored to the ceiling with chains around his ankles holding him in place. If it wasn't for a quick diffindo, cast by Harry to cut off the ends of his robes, they would have missed his ears growing at an alarming rate until they were long, pointed, and with long pink hair poking out of each one. None of them could miss the way Mr. Weasley's eyes darted in terror around the room though, as they had swelled

enormously, with long eyelashes that came to the tip of his nose, six inch long warty nose, that also had pink and yellow hair coming out of each nostril. As they watched, it looked like Mr. Weasley was bending over as his back began to pop out in weird little humps, and his feet began to swell and lengthen. After a moment, his toenails were about a foot long, cracked in places, and poking out of his boots. His hands had copied his feet, and not one of them failed to notice the red, flowery polish on each nail.

Harry watched on in amusement as he cast the dreaded bat bogeys curse that was a favorite of Ginny's, just to add flare to the angry red boils that had popped out all over Mr. Weasley's body. After a moment, Harry didn't think that he should have mixed the two spells, as in addition to the bat bogeys, Mr. Weasley's face also began to sprout tentacles and he grew a long, orange, fluffy tail.

"Now, just one more touch," Harry said with a broad, evil grin. The twins looked over at Harry in horror.

"What are you going to do?" Fred asked.

"Whatever it is, remind us never to get on your bad side, Harry," George said as he glanced at his father in awe.

Harry whipped out his wand, and said calmly, "Tantellegra."

Immediately, Mr. Weasley's legs began to dance a wild jig.

Looking over at Gabby and Ginny, they were both wide eyed in shock, with tears of laughter streaming down their faces. As they came out of their shock, they looked at Mr. Weasley once more, then each other, before breaking down into hysterical fits of laughter.

Percy, however, did not look so pleased. He looked on in a very disapproving way before getting up and marching out of the kitchen.

Remus, Narcissa, and Andromeda each said nothing, but they all looked on, each with a small grin at the antics.

"Harry," Remus said chuckling softly. "Well done. You would have made your father proud with that one."

"Don't give me the credit," Harry replied. "Gabby and Ginny have been running over ideas all dinner. I just played a few of them out for your enjoyment."

A wierd sound caught their attention. Looking over at Tonks, Harry noticed that her eyes were bright with tears of mirth, and she had transformed her nose into the trunk of an elephant, and was blowing it loudly at Mr. Weasley, much to the delight of Fred and George, who were cheering her on heartily.

"Now, now. That is quite enough," Mrs. Weasley said, looking up at her husband with a look of grim satisfaction. "Yes, I think you have learned your lesson, haven't you, Arthur."

"He can't answer you, Mrs. Weasley," Harry said merrily. "He's petrified."

"Well, how long do you plan on keeping him that way, Harry, dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked him softly.

Gabby and Ginny both smiled as Harry gave them a sideways glance.

"Oh, just until I'm sure dad has learned his lesson," Ginny answered her mother before Harry could reply. "I think until the spell wears off and he falls off the ceiling should be just long enough, don't you think?"

Harry thought that Mrs. Weasley was going to demand him to release her husband, but was stunned when she gave her daughter an encouraging smile, before grinning cruelly up at her husband.

"Whatever you think is best, dear. I think your father has earned it," Mrs. Weasley answered as she looked fondly at her daughter. "Ron, go clean yourself up."

Ron's ears went pink. Until that moment, he had been staring up at his father, slack-jawed, and failed to notice that he had squirted pumpkin juice out through his nose, and all over himself and the rest of his dinner. Red faced and embarrassed, Ron quickly got up and ran out through the kitchen door, and up to the bathroom to clean himself up.

"Ginny, would you like to show Harry your room?" Mrs. Weasley asked her daughter quietly as she picked up her dishes. "I think that you and he should try to get to know each other a bit before he goes to Hogwarts for his first year. You won't be able to see him much until next summer."

Ginny's face lit up. "Sure!" she replied, grabbing Harry's hand and jumping up off his lap. "Harry do you want to come see my room?"

Harry looked at Gabrielle, unsure of what to do. He knew Ginny, and trusted her, but Ginny didn't know that. She had no way of knowing anything from the timeline that Harry had come from. Harry also had to contend with the fact that Gabby seemingly approved of him getting to know each girl that he was contracted to, but that still didn't make it any easier. Harry would rather die than to hurt or betray his Gabby, and she knew that. Still, Ginny was in this too, and there was nothing that Harry could do about it. He would have to learn to live with it and make the best of it. Neither one of them had a choice, or much of one for that matter, but that didn't mean that they had to allow it to control them and make them miserable. Harry had enough problems to make his life difficult, without having to deal with the added stress of forced relationships. All in all, Harry and Gabby had both agreed that it was for the best for everyone involved, including themselves, that they give it a chance, and see where things led. Who knows, it could be a blessing in disguise.

Ginny noticed the look that Harry gave Gabby, and it stung. Here he was, the Boy-Who-Lived, but Ginny found herself attracted more to the person than the legend that she had thought him to be. Harry seemed to be very easy going, but not at all open about his past. He seemed to be the type that you had to gain his trust before he opened up, but once you had it, you had it to the full.

Secretly, Ginny was glad in her heart about what her father had done. True enough, she hated the thought of a marriage contract, but without it, who knows when she would have finally gathered the courage to get to know Harry, and be herself around him. Her father had given her a powerful reason to do it, and she silently thanked him for it. Whatever they went through together, Ginny vowed to herself that she would always be there for him, and be honest with him. She would never betray him. Ginny had noticed the haunted, faraway look that Harry got whenever he stared off into space. The

others might not notice it, save for Gabrielle, who Harry seemed to be entirely in tune with.

It was wierd at first, but Ginny was already beginning to get used to it. Maybe it was the magic behind the contract at work, but she didn't know. What she did know was that Harry and Gabby seemed to be able to tell exactly what the other was thinking and feeling, without ever saying a word. 'How can I compete with that? That bond that they share connects them on a deeper level than he and I are likely to ever reach.' she thought to herself. 'Come on, Weasley. Get a grip. This may be your only chance.'

Gabby nodded at Harry. "Go up with her Harry. I am sure that you both have a lot of things to talk about."

Harry gave her a concerned look and stayed firmly in his seat, while Ginny was still holding his hand. "Are you sure, Love. I mean this isn't easy for me, and I can't imagine it being any easier for you. I don't want to hurt either of you."

Gabby sighed. "I'm sure, Harry. I know that you love me, I can feel it. But you need to do this, if not for yourself, do it for me, and for Ginny. Remember she's in this as much as we are."

Harry smiled slowly and let out his breath before allowing Ginny to steer him towards her room.

Seconds later, they slipped out of the kitchen and down a narrow passageway to anuneven staircase, which wound its way, zigzagging up through the house. On the third landing, a door stood ajar. Ginny blushed as she went into her room.

"Sorry, my room is a mess," she said as she sat down on her bed, watching Harry look around her room in amazement.

The walls of her room were baby blue, with white and yellow flowers adorning the wallpaper. For some reason, it was exactly what Harry had imagined a young girl's room would be. Next to the window, looking out towards the back yard and Quidditch pitch, was her bed. 'She must have been more upset than I thought,' Harry thought to himself as he noted the now dry tear stains on her white, flowery pillowcase. At the foot of her bed was a small, antique desk with little on it besides a lamp and a quill. Her closet was wide open, and

revealed how organized she liked to keep her things. Finally, beside that, was a stand that had three shelves, each adorned with stuffed animals and more than one book that was either about Harry, or had him mentioned in it.

Ginny watched Harry quietly before breaking the silence after a couple of minutes. "Harry, you don't want this do you?"

Harry looked at Ginny sadly as tears welled up in her bright brown eyes. He also watched as she wiped her vibrant red hair out of her eyes as she continued to gaze up at Harry. Harry sat down. "It's not that, Ginny. I do like you, but you have to know that it wasn't my choice to be in this situation in the first place. I'll be honest, you're going to be beautiful one day, and a real prize for whoever is lucky enough to have you love them. But how can either of us be sure that it will be me that you fall in love with? What happens if you fall in love with another bloke, but you're forced to marry me? Nobody should have to go through that. I don't want you or any other girl to end up getting hurt on my behalf. You deserve the right to choose for yourself who you spend your life with. And even if you do choose me, how can I possibly satisfy the needs of so many girls at once? How can I make you all happy, without treating you any different or better than the others?"

Ginny smiled and thought to herself. 'Was this all that Harry was worried about? That I won't love him? Or that he won't be able to make me happy and treat me right?'

"Harry, I know that it is my choice, but I want that chance with you. I'm not going into this because some marriage contract tells me to, I'm doing it because I want to get to know you. Who knows? We're both still young, and we have seven more years until we have to decide. In the wizarding world, girls are old enough to marry when they turn sixteen, you know. We have plenty of time to get to know one another and be together."

"But what about the other girls?" Harry asked her, looking directly into her soft brown eyes.

"Harry," Ginny began, carefully choosing her words. "I'm a girl. I might only be ten, but I still understand the way a girl's mind works. Any girl that decides to take the chance to get to know the real you, and marry you for love, instead of some stupid contract, will grow to

understand. Look at Gabrielle. You truly seem to love her, and want to make her happy. You would never do anything to hurt her, and you are always there to provide for her and protect her. What else could a girl want? You may not always have the time or energy for all of us, but we will understand. We will know that you love us each equally for who we are, and that you chose to get to know us, and listen to our feelings and our fears, instead of using the contracts to force yourself on us. No matter what you think, that alone would make any girl love you. You really are a great wizard, Harry."

Harry looked at her in astonishment. "You're amazing, Ginny. I mean, Gabby has tried to explain it to me, but I've never understood it until now, the way you put it."

"Nothing against her, especially since I already like her a lot," Ginny replied, grinning. "But Gabrielle is veela. Veela are naturally submissive to their mates, and she wouldn't necessarily understand the feelings involved, having never actually experienced them herself to the fullest extent. It's just not in her nature."

"Thanks, Ginny," Harry said softly, leaning in to hug her tightly, just before a loud CRASH was heard from the kitchen, followed by Mrs. Weasley's furious shriek.

"RONALD WEASLEY!"

Harry gulped, and looking at each other, Harry and Ginny both darted for the door and leapt down the stairs.

When they got to the kitchen, they saw, quite clearly, what had made the crash. Ron was lying unconscious against the wall next to the stove, with a quickly swelling eye, and blood running freely down his nose. Mrs. Weasley looked furious, but was stunned speechless by an angry Gabrielle, who had apparently, knocked Ron cold.

"What happened?" Harry asked, causing them both to jump, along with everyone else, who had failed to notice Harry and Ginny reenter the room.

Gabby's eyes and arms were still glowing a deadly blue, and her passionfire, as she called it, ran along her arms and chest, as she looked at Harry and answered. "The nerve of zis boy!" she growled

in hot fury. "'E had ze nerve to say to me zat you already have a girl, Ginny, and zat you don't need me. 'E had the nerve to snake his filzzy hands ozzer my thigh and squeeze me in ze most inappropriate of places. So I cursed ze leetle boy. Eet eez less zan he deserves, I assure you."

None of them except Harry had ever heard Gabrielle speak with a French accent, and that alone told Harry that this was bad. Even Mrs. Weasley had the good sense to back away from the angry young veela.

Glancing back at Ron with hate filled eyes, Gabby continued. "If zat ees not bad enough, he called me a veela whore when I told him zat I love you and zat you love me. He told me zat I should go back to where I am wanted. He eez filth, slime. He eez not worzzy to kiss my feet."

Mrs. Weasley looked ashamed, and nearly as angry as Gabrielle, that her youngest son would dare do such a thing. Harry, though, was beyond even that. Ron had been his best friend before he came back, and Harry knew all to well how Ron always seemed to want things that he could never have, especially when his jealousy got the better of him, which was often. Words couldn't describe the hurt and betrayal, the cold angry wrath that Harry felt. 'Get over it, Harry. This isn't the same Ron you knew. He doesn't even know you. The friendship you had with him is long gone, and he just destroyed any chance of rebuilding it.'

Harry took Gabby in his arms, giving her a comforting look and a slow, meaningful kiss, and she promptly broke down crying. Harry, however, was growing angrier by the second. Raising his wand, he pointed it at Ron, but Mrs. Weasley spoke up.

"Harry, dear. Please take it easy on him, for my sake. I promise you that Arthur and I will punish him most severely and do everything in our power to make sure that he learns from it and never does such a thing to a girl again. I can't bear the shame that he has brought down upon our family. We never raised him to be like that," Mrs. Weasley begged him.

Mr. Weasley, and everyone else in the room, save for Gabby and Ron, looked at Harry grimly. Nodding slowly to Harry, Mr. Weasley said, "Do what you have to do, Son. I only ask you this. Let him live.

Let him live so that we can try to fix whatever we did wrong with him. He has never done anything like this before, and we need to know why he did it."

Harry spoke slowly. "I know why. He has always been extremely susceptible to the veela allure, even at a minimum, but that is no excuse for his actions. Gabrielle can't be blamed in any way for what he did. It merely lowered his inhibitions, and made his jealousy plain to see. He wanted her, and tried to get her. Now he gets to pay."

Raising his wand towards Ron, Harry said "Ennervate."

Coming to, Ron noticed where he had landed, and looked up around at everyone. Catching Harry's furious gaze, he gulped.

"Do you have anything to say to defend yourself, Ron? Or should I just assume that you had every intention to sexually harass my Lady?" Harry growled angrily.

Ron gave Gabby a fierce, scalding look. "I don't have to answer to you. She is just a veela whore. Nothing I do to her will even matter. Besides she-," but whatever he was going to say next was cut off by his bloodcurdling scream as Harry stomped on his ankle, and ground his foot into it, shattering several bones instantly.

Obviously, the Drakul blood in Harry enhanced his strength even more than he had thought, seeing as he hadn't meant to do that much damage. 'Oh well. This is even better,' Harry thought to himself as Ron squirmed on the ground in pain, looking as if he was going to pass out again.

"Uh uh, no passing out, Ron. You are going to feel every ounce of agony that you deserve for treating my Lady like that," Harry muttered as he cast a spell to keep Ron conscience.

"What did she ever do to you, hmm? She just met you earlier tonight. And since then you have continually tried to harass her, even when all the signals she sent you told you no."

Ron laughed. "What makes you think she had to do something to me? She's a veela. She's not good to be treated like anything except an animal."

Harry was growing angrier by the second, and he gave his wand a flick, muttering "Glacium Conico."

Immediately, a spear of ice flew from the tip of Harry's wand, impaling Ron's entire left leg to the floor, as everyone else looked on in horrified silence.

Looking up in pain, Ron shrank back from the poisonous, emerald green eyes that stared coldly back at him. Suddenly, the room began to spin around him, and he found himself chained to a wall, in a pitch black room. Terrified, he looked around, but saw nothing.

"Welcome." Harry's voice came from somewhere in the darkness, and a chair appeared in front of Ron.

"Where are we?" Ron asked.

Harry gave him a solemn look. "We are in my mindscape. Right now, your mind is trapped within my own. Within this torture chamber I devised, solely for my enemies. You, are my first guest. This is my world, my rules. Here I can do anything to you, while your body is still lying on the floor. And don't worry about how long we are going to be here. Time means nothing here, and one hundred years of agony for you will pass by here before I let you go. When I do, not even a second will have passed in reality. It's all in your mind Ron, but you can't escape it. Let's begin."

There was a short, awkward silence, as Harry and Ron each gave the other a look of utmost loathing before they went quiet. Not two seconds later, though, Ron began screaming at the top of his lungs, and he was sweating and panting heavily, looking terrified at the very site of Harry. Scrambling to get away, Ron fell on his own, impaled leg, falling flat on his face. Everyone except Gabby looked utterly confused.

Gabby, however, looked at Harry in horror. Harry, looking grim, nodded silently at her unspoken question, and she knew what he had done. Harry had once told her of the powerful technique that Merlin had taught him. It allowed Harry to trap a victim within his own mindscape, where time meant nothing. He could inflict any type of magical, physical, emotional, or any other type of pain conceivable to the victim, torturing them for literally forever if he chose, and no time would fly by in the outside world.

"How long?" Gabby asked quietly.

"One hundred years," came the quiet reply from Harry. "I made sure not to allow him to go insane, although if he had actually endured it in reality, no spell could have kept him sane after the first three hours."

Gabby's mouth opened and closed silently, while everyone else was even more confused. Sighing, Harry cast several healing spells on Ron, making him physically, good as new. But he was able to do nothing to heal the mental, emotional, and psychological trauma that he had inflicted on his old friend.

"Are you ready to go Gabby?"

Nodding silently, Gabby followed Harry to the front door.

Just before they walked out, Harry turned and sighed. "Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, I am sorry. I didn't know that us coming here would cause such problems, and I apologize for it having happened in your home."

Mr. Weasley spoke up. "Harry, son. It's not either of your fault. The question is, will my son be alright?"

"That's hard to say right now. Physically, he is perfectly fine. But he will never forget what happened to him. No memory spell is powerful enough to wipe away the memory. After all, one hundred years is extremely hard to make someone forget. I'd say give him a day or so, and he should be back to normal. That is, with a powerful fear of Gabby and I. Only his thoughts of hurting her or another girl should trigger and unlock the memory. If he doesn't then the spells that are cast with the technique I used should keep the memory sealed permanently. Ultimately, it all comes down to him, but if he suddenly starts screaming and gets that crazed, tortured look, you will know that he was thinking about hurting another girl that way."

All the Weasley's, and also Remus and Narcissa, stared in awe. Andromeda and Tonks had left as Ginny and Harry went up to her room.

Hand in hand, Harry and Gabrielle walked out to the ward line and Harry silently apparated them to their room. Lying down in each other's arms, they were both out like a light.

Platform 9 3/4, King's Cross Station, London

Harry sighed as he and Gabby gathered up the last of their belongings, and packed them away. It was September 1st, and Harry was looking forward to being back at Hogwarts.

It had been his first home in the wizarding world. He missed Hogwarts so much it was like having a constant stomachache. He missed the castle, with its secret passageways and ghosts, his classes, the mail arriving by owl, eating banquets in the Great Hall, sleeping in his four-poster bed in the tower dormitory, visiting the gamekeeper, Hagrid, in his cabin next to the Forbidden Forest in the grounds, and, especially, Quidditch, the most popular sport in the wizarding world.

Looking over, Harry watched as Gabby coaxed the phoenix that she called Selene into a magnificent silver and golden cage, which sat next to Hedwig's cage, which was an exact duplicate of the cage Selene was now perched in.

Gathering Hedwig's cage and their trunk, Harry wrapped his arm around Gabby, who was clutching Selene's cage in her hand, and apparated them to the King's Cross Station.

According to the large clock over the arrivals board, Harry and Gabby had a solid thirty minutes left to get on the train to Hogwarts. Harry was glad that they were so early, seeing as he had business to attend to before the train departed.

Looking around and seeing only muggles, Gabby gave Harry a questioning look. Explaining to Gabby how to get on the platform, Harry showed her where it was and said, "You go first, just in case. That way I'll be here if you don't manage it. Confidence is the key. Just walk straight at the barrier, nothing to it. Don't stop and don't be scared

you'll crash into it, that's very important. "

Nodding, Gabby looked excited and strolled purposefully towards the barrier between platforms nine and ten. A second later, she disappeared.

Now Harry walked briskly towards the barrier and with a meaningful look at the train that had just arrived at platform 9, Harry leaned casually up against the barrier dividing platforms 9 and 10.

In a moment, he had fallen sideways through the solid metal onto platform nine and three-quarters and looked up to see the Hogwarts Express, a scarlet steam engine, puffing smoke over a platform packed with witches and wizards seeing their children onto the train. A sign overhead said Hogwarts Express, eleven O'clock. Harry looked behind him and saw a wrought iron archway where the barrier had been, with the words Platform Nine and Three-Quarters on it. Smoke from the engine drifted over the heads of the chattering crowd, while cats of every color wound here and there between their legs. Owls hooted to one another in a disgruntled sort of way over the babble and the scraping of heavy trunks. The first few carriages were already packed with students, some hanging out of the window to talk to their families, some fighting over seats. And just ahead of him, Gabby was looking around in awe.

"Harry, my boy!" Dumbledore's voice was heard over the crowd, and excited students and parents shouted and pointed at the Headmaster as he made his way through the crowd towards Harry and Gabby, closely followed by Cornelius Fudge.

Honestly, Harry couldn't tell which one looked stranger as Fudge had rumpled gray hair and an anxious expression, and

was wearing a strange mixture of clothes: a pinstriped suit, an emerald tie, a long black cloak, and pointed purple boots. Under his arm he carried a lime-green bowler hat. Dumbledore, on the other hand was wearing long starry robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were light, bright, and sparkling behind half-moon spectacles.

"Good morning, Headmaster, Minister," Harry said quietly as Gabrielle stood next to him. "Minister, can I introduce you to my Lady Gabrielle?"

Fudge bowed to Gabby and took her hand, kissing her knuckles. "My pleasure to meet you, young Lady. And you, Lord Potter," he said, looking down at Harry.

"I see that news travels as fast as always. It's a wonder the daily prophet hasn't got hold of it yet," Harry replied.

Dumbledore chuckled. "Yes, I daresay that they will likely come out with a story on it very soon. But first, we have business. Why exactly did you want us both here today?"

Harry, who had been watching the Weasley's, including Bill, who had a grim expression, arrive, answered, "I believe that you will find out soon enough, Headmaster. Now, would you do me a favor and ask Ron to examine his rat, Scabbers. Any reason you give should be fine, I have already set the necessary wards around the platform while you were speaking to prevent his escape."

Cornelius Fudge's face darkened, and he looked at Harry skeptically. "Let who escape?"

Harry replied. "In a moment, you shall see. If you do not see him for yourself, Minister, then you will not believe a word I say, and you will refuse to admit the Ministry's mistakes in condemning an innocent man to prison."

"Now wait just one moment," Fudge cried angrily, but was cut short as the Weasley's pushed forward in the crowd towards them.

Catching Bill's attention Harry asked him quietly, "Are we ready?"

Bill nodded and answered, "Yes, I will guard the barrier and dad is with Ron. As soon as Dumbledore takes him from Ron to examine him, dad will pull Ron back, out of danger."

Harry nodded grimly. "Good. Then we are all set."

And with not a second to lose, Harry noted as Dumbledore approached Ron and Mr. Weasley.

Ron gaped at Dumbledore as he approached. "Hello, Arthur. And this must be your youngest, Ron."

"Yes. He will be starting his first year at Hogwarts this year," Mr. Weasley answered, patting Ron on the back.

Ron went pink, and Scabbers peaked his head out from the top of his shirt.

Keeping his eye on Scabbers, Dumbledore reached out to shake his hand. "Well, we will be very glad to have you at Hogwarts, Ron. Which House do you think you will be in?" said kindly.

Stuttering, Ron replied. "Gr-Gryffindor, Sir. Just like the rest of my family."

Dumbledore gave his best grandfather smile and said, "I see. I believe that you will make a fine addition to Gryffindor. And may I examine your rat, please? If I am not badly mistaken, I remember that your older brother Bill, who was Head Boy, and a fine student, had one exactly like it."

Ron took Scabbers out of his pocket and held him out to Dumbledore, who took him carefully. "His name is Scabbers. Bill gave him to me after he left Hogwarts."

"Did he now?" Dumbledore said with a twinkle in his eye. "Then I daresay that this rat has been holding out on us. To live that long, he must have some sort of magic powers. Has he ever shown signs of any?"

"N-No, Sir."

"Then let's examine him closer. Arthur, if you will." Mr. Weasley, taking the cue, quickly pulled Ron out of the way as Harry, Gabby, and Dumbledore each drew their wands. Seeing this, Fudge pulled his wand.

"Thank you for bringing me here today," Dumbledore said softly, speaking to Harry. "It so happens that I have seen this particular rat up close before, just once. I don't know how this is possible, or how you knew, but we will get to the bottom of this."

As he spoke, Scabbers grew more and more violent. The rat was going berserk; squeaking madly, twisting and flailing, trying to sink

his teeth into Dumbledore's hand. His efforts were in vain as Dumbledore had a gentle, but firm grip on him.

Fudge was standing next to Dumbledore, obviously not realizing what was going on. But he listened intently to Dumbledore and watched Scabber squirm wildly. "Dumbledore, you're talking mad, man. What's gotten into you? Let the rat go, can't you see that it doesn't like you?"

Dumbledore didn't listen. Instead, he gave Fudge a serious look. "Cornelius, this is no ordinary rat. If I remember correctly, Ron's older brother Bill once told me that he found him what would be nearly a decade ago."

Fudge looked indignant. "I think not, Dumbledore. No common rat can live that long. Two to three years at the most, four maybe, but ten? Impossible!"

"It is as you say, Cornelius," Dumbledore said gravely. "I have seen this particular rat up close before, but without the missing toe. That, however, was nearly fifteen years ago."

Fudge's mouth dropped. "What are you saying Dumbledore?"

"Harry was right, you know," Dumbledore replied. "Neither of us would have believed whatever story he told us unless we saw this rat for ourselves."

"What do you mean?" Fudge was getting anxious.

Dumbledore was mumbling under his breath, not listening. "The biggest bit of him they found was his finger."

"Who Dumbledore? Who are you talking about?" Fudge exclaimed anxiously, but again, Dumbledore was paying no attention to the Minister.

"Of course," Dumbledore breathed. "So simple... so brilliant... he cut it off himself?"

"Just before he transformed," said Harry.

Fudge's eyes bulged out as he listened to Harry, looking back and forth between Harry and Scabbers in a panic. A few people around them that had been eavesdropping gasped. "That's not possible. Peter Pettigrew is dead! There were witnesses who saw Pettigrew die," Fudge said. "A whole street full of them...Dumbledore do you realize what this could mean?"

"They didn't see what they thought they saw!" said Harry savagely, still watching Peter struggling in Dumbledore's hands.

"And it means, Cornelius, that we imprisoned an innocent man," Dumbledore said quietly.

"But Dumbledore... this can't be Pettigrew... it just can't be true, you know it can't..."

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows, "Why can't it be true?" he said calmly.

Fudge replied quickly, looking more and more panicked. "Because... because people would know if Peter Pettigrew had been an Animagus. Come off it, Dumbledore. We at the Ministry of Magic keep tabs on witches and wizards who can become animals; the Animagi register shows what animal they become, and their markings and things...and there have

been only seven Animagi this 's name isn't on that list Dumbledore."

Harry barely had time to register his surprise that Fudge knew these facts when Lupin started to laugh, stepping forward from the crowd.

"Right in one, Minster!" Lupin said. "But the Ministry never knew that there used to be three unregistered Animagi running around Hogwarts."

Fudge and Dumbledore both looked thunderstruck, and they both mouthed, "Three?"

Perhaps I should start at the beginning he said as he pushed his graying hair out of his eyes, thought for a moment then said, "Sadly, it all starts with me - with my becoming a werewolf," he said grimly, "Please forgive me, Dumbledore. In the end, I betrayed your trust, but here today you, and everyone, must know the truth. "I have often

felt very guilty about betraying your trust, of course... you admitted me to Hogwarts when no other headmaster would have done so, and you had no clue that I was breaking the rules you had set down for my own and others' safety. You never knew I had led three fellow students

into becoming Animagi illegally."

Lupin's face had hardened, and there was self-disgust in his voice. "All these years, I have been debating with myself, wondering whether I should tell you what I had done. But I didn't do it. Why? Because I was too cowardly. It would have meant admitting that I'd betrayed his trust while I was at school, admitting that I'd led others along with me... and your trust has always meant everything to me."

Dumbledore looked on sadly, without saying a word, but Harry could see the disappointment in his eyes. "If what you say is true, that is an extraordinary achievement - not least, keeping it quiet from me.

"Anyways," Remus continued. "None of this could have happened if I hadn't been bitten... and if I hadn't been so foolish. I was a very small boy when I received the bite and although my parents tried everything, in those days there was no cure. The Wolfsbane potion is a very recent discovery. It makes me safe, you see. As long as I take it in the week, preceding the full moon, I keep my mind when I transform... I'm able to curl up somewhere, a harmless wolf, and wait for the moon to wane again.."

"Before the Wolfsbane Potion was discovered, however, I became a fully fledged monster once a month. It seemed impossible that I would be able to come to Hogwarts. Other parents weren't likely to want their children exposed to me."

At this point Lupin gazed sadly over at Dumbledore, with a look of deep respect and admiration, shining in his face.

"But then Dumbledore became Headmaster, and he was sympathetic. He said that as long as we took certain precautions, there was no reason that I shouldn't be allowed to come to school..." Lupin sighed, and looked directly at

Harry and Fudge.

"Not many people know that the Whomping Willow was planted the year I came to Hogwarts. But even if they do know, very few realize the reason it is there. The truth is that it was planted because I came to Hogwarts. The shrieking shack, and a tunnel that leads to it were built for my use. Once a month, I was smuggled by Madam Pomfrey out of the castle, through the tunnel, to the shrieking shack, to transform. The tree was placed at the tunnel mouth to stop anyone coming across me

while I was dangerous."

Fudge obviously couldn't see where this story was going, or why it had anything to do with Peter Pettigrew being an Animagus, but he had his attention focused solely on Remus, listening raptly all the same.

Everyone else on the platform seemed to be listening intently too, seeing as the only sound apart from Lupin's voice was Scabbers's frightened squeaking.

"My transformations in those days were - were terrible. It is very painful to turn into a werewolf. I was separated from humans to bite, so I bit and scratched myself instead. The villagers heard the noise and the screaming and thought they were hearing particularly violent spirits."

Looking once more at Dumbledore, he continued, "You, Dumbledore, you encouraged the rumor, and even now, when the house has been silent for years, the villagers of Hogsmeade don't dare approach it..."

Remus smiled, looking around at the crowd of wizards and witches, and children, who were listening wholeheartedly to his story. "But apart from my transformations, I was happier than I had ever been in my life. For the first time ever, I had friends, three great friends. Sirius Black... Peter Pettigrew... and, of course, your father, Harry - James Potter. We were inseparable. James Potter and Sirius Black, the two cleverest students in the school. Me, the studious werewolf. And Peter Pettigrew, who was always seen tailing after James and Sirius."

"Now, my three friends could hardly fail to notice that I disappeared once a month. Oh, I made up all sorts of stories. I told them my

mother was ill, and that I had to go home to see her... I was terrified they would desert me the moment they found out what I was. But of course, in the end, they worked out the truth..."

There was an intake of breath from nearly everyone on the platform. A little boy pulled on Remus' sleeve, who smiled down at him. "What happened then, Mr.?"

Remus smiled as the boy's mother gave Remus a terrified look and dragged him away, mumbling her apologies. "My fears proved to be unfounded. They didn't desert me at all. Instead, they did something for me that would make my transformations not only bearable, but the best times of my life. They became Animagi."

Fudge, and nearly everyone else, looked astounded.

"Yes, indeed," said Lupin, laughing at the reactions he was getting. "It took them the best part of three years to work out how to do it. James and Sirius were the cleverest students in the school, and lucky they were, because the Animagus transformation can go horribly wrong. That is one reason the Ministry keeps such a close watch on those attempting to do it. Peter needed all the help he could get from James and Sirius. But finally, in our fifth year, they managed it. They could each turn into a different animal at will. I was Moony. James was Prongs. Sirius was Padfoot. And Peter was Wormtail."

"Are you saying," Fudge asked slowly, "that this rat is actually Peter Pettigrew?"

"That is exactly what I am saying, Minister. After all, how many times have I seen him transform?" Remus answered quickly. "I have no doubt that this is Peter."

"Still," Fudge said. "Sirius was the Potter's secret Keeper. This just proves that Peter Pettigrew staged his own death in order to escape from Sirius Black!"

"What about the twelve muggles he murdered while staging his death, eh Minister?" Harry asked harshly, causing Fudge to go white. "Tell them the truth, Dumbledore, tell them what really happened, or I will."

Dumbledore's old, wrinkled face was downcast. At that moment, the old Headmaster looked every bit as old as he was. He turned towards Harry, his eyes pleading with him.

"Enough of this," said Harry, with a steely note in his voice. "Sirius persuaded my parents to change to Peter at the last moment. He persuaded them to use him as Secret-Keeper instead of himself. He thought that it would be safer, since Sirius would be the obvious choice, being my dad's best friend and his best man at his and my mom's wedding. The night they died, Sirius had arranged to check on Peter, to make sure he was still safe, but when he arrived at his hiding place, he'd gone. Yet there was no sign of a struggle. Sirius set out for my parents' house straight away, but by the time he got there, it was already too late. And when he saw their house, destroyed, and their bodies. Sirius realized what Peter must've done... what he'd done..."

"Anyways, just before he transformed," Harry said . "When Sirius cornered him, he yelled for the whole street to hear that Sirius had betrayed Lily and James. Then, before Sirius could curse him, Peter blew apart the street with the wand behind his back, killed everyone within twenty feet of himself - and sped down into the sewer with the other rats. Shortly after, he found a wizarding family, and ever since has been keeping an ear out, just in case, to catch on to any new concerning Voldemort, or his whereabouts."

There was a collective hiss and shudder from the crowd at Voldemort's name, which caused Harry to look at them all in disgust. "Now really, why do you all fear the name so much? That is what Voldemort wants. Fearing his name only gives him more power over all of you. I know better than anyone, what he can do, but what use is it to give someone the power to terrify you with their very name? I say fear the man, and what he can do, not the name. Fear of the name only increases fear of the thing itself. Voldemort always prided himself on being extremely competent in being able to establish fear and distrust between people, including his own followers. Why would you let yourselves fall prey to that? Stand together, united, and as one you will be able to prevent the rise of more Dark Lords."

The crowd cheered Harry loudly, but Dumbledore gave him a curious look, as if barely seeing the person that Harry really was.

"There's one certain way to prove what really happened," Dumbledore said.

"What are you going to do with him, Dumbledore?" Fudge asked him tensely.

"Force him to show himself," answered Remus. "If he really is a rat, it won't hurt him."

Dumbledore motioned for them. "Stand back, wand at the ready. We shall soon see if this is truly Peter."

Harry and Gabby, along with Fudge, had their wands out. Several of the witches and wizards around them were backing away, also with their wands out, gazing intently at the rat in Dumbledore's hands.

"Ready?"

Everyone nodded.

Prodding Scabbers with his wand, Dumbledore said, "On the count of three then. One - two - THREE!"

A flash of blue-white light erupted from Dumbledore's wand; and for a moment, Scabbers was frozen in midair, his small gray form twisting madly before the rat fell and hit the ground. There was another blinding flash of light and then -.

It was like watching a speeded-up film of a growing tree. A head was shooting upward from the ground; limbs were sprouting; and a moment later, a man was standing where Scabbers had been, cringing and wringing his hands. Several of the cats that had been running around the platform were spitting and snarling at him.

Peter was a very short man, hardly taller than Harry and Gabby. His thin, colorless hair was unkempt and there was a large bald patch on top. He had the appearance of a plump man that had been caught dead in the act. His skin looked grubby, almost like Scabbers's fur, and something of the rat lingered around his pointed nose and his very small, watery eyes. He looked around at everyone, his breathing fast and shallow. Harry saw his eyes dart to the barrier and back again.

"Don't even think about it, Peter," Harry said dangerously, blood pounding in his ears as he pointed his wand at Peter's heart.

All around them there were gasps and screams. Fudge looked pale, and Harry, triumphant. 'Good luck trying to cover this one up, Minister,' he thought to himself happily.

Ron looked on in utter disgust, and Mr. Weasley urged him forward, onto the train, while helping him stuff his trunk in through the train's door and up the stairs to the cabins.

Peter appeared to be downright terrified. This certainly wasn't something that he had expected to happen. His cover was blown, but how? For ten years, he had been in disguise, and yet no one had recognized him. No one, until now, had known his secret. How then could this eleven year old boy know? How could he have revealed Peter, so magnificently, for the whole world to see? Looking up at Harry, fear etched every line of his face. "How did you know?"

"How I knew is none of your concern," Harry snarled. "My Godfather has spent the last ten years in a small cell in Azkaban for a crime he didn't commit, and you framed him! We've been having a little chat, Peter, about what happened the night my parents died. You might have missed the finer points while you were squeaking around, trying to escape from Dumbledore's hands."

"Remus," gasped Pettigrew, looking up at Remus, who now had his wand trained on him. Harry could see beads of sweat breaking out over his pasty face, "you don't believe him, do you?"

"It certainly is difficult to believe any other reason for a man to want to spend ten years as a rat, much less a boy's pet," Remus replied, keeping his wand aimed at Peter's temple.

"I did it because of Sirius, he tried to kill me!" Peter yelled. "He killed Lily and James and he tried to

kill me too. You've got to help me, Remus."

"How could spending ten years as a rat save you from Sirius? He has been locked up in Azkaban all this time," Remus asked. "Did you think that Sirius was going to break out of Azkaban? When nobody has ever done it before?"

"He's got dark powers the rest of us can only dream of!" Pettigrew shouted shrilly. "It's only a matter of time until he breaks out and comes after me again! He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named taught him loads of tricks."

"Voldemort teach Sirius tricks? You're mad," Harry yelled. Peter flinched as though Harry had brandished a whip at him.

Harry noticed him flinch. "Hah, that's brilliant. What, scared to hear your old master's name?" said Harry. "I don't blame

you, Peter. His lot aren't very happy with you, are they?"

"Don't know what you mean, Harry" muttered Pettigrew, his breathing faster than ever. His whole face was shining with sweat now.

"You haven't been hiding from Sirius these last ten years," retorted Harry. "You've

been hiding from Voldemort's old supporters. I've heard things recently Peter. They all seem to think you're dead, or you'd have to answer to them. They think the traitor double-crossed them. Voldemort went to the Potters' on your information, and there Voldemort met his downfall. Not all Voldemort's supporters ended up in Azkaban, did they? There are still plenty of them out here, biding their time, pretending they've seen the error of their ways. I bet if they ever got wind that you were still alive, Peter -"

"Don't know... what you're talking about..." said Peter again, more shrilly now than ever. He wiped his face on his sleeve and looked up at Remus beseechingly. "You don't believe this - this madness, Remus -"

"I must admit, Peter, this does explain quite a bit. Surely, if you were innocent man, you could have revealed yourself before now," said Lupin evenly.

"Innocent, but scared!" squealed Peter. "If Voldemort's supporters were after me, it was because I put one of their best men in Azkaban. The spy, Sirius Black! You don't have any idea what they would have done to me had they found me."

Harry's face contorted in cold fury.

"How dare you," he growled suddenly. "Sirius, a spy for Voldemort? When did he ever see the need to sneak around people who were stronger and more powerful than himself? But you, Peter. I'll never understand why my parents, or any of the others, couldn't tell you were the spy from the start. You always liked big friends who'd look after you, didn't you? It used to be

my dad. Him, Sirius, and Remus too!"

Pettigrew wiped his face again; he was almost panting for breath. "Me, a spy... must be out of your mind... never... don't know how you can say such a -"

"Don't give me that load of dung," Harry snarled, restraining himself with great effort from using his wand to hack Peter to peices.

"My parents only made you their Secret-Keeper because Sirius suggested it," Harry hissed, so venomously that Pettigrew took a step backward. "He thought it was the perfect plan, the perfect bluff. Voldemort would be sure to go after him. Voldemort would never dream they'd use a weak, talentless thing like you. Oh, it must have been the finest moment of your miserable life, telling your pathetic master that you could hand him the Potters."

Pettigrew was muttering distractedly; Harry caught words like "far-fetched" and "lunacy," but he couldn't help paying more attention to the bone white, ashen color of Pettigrew's face and the way his eyes continued to dart towards the barrier separating the platform from muggle London.

"Believe me, Peter. Sirius never betrayed my parents. He would have died before he betrayed them."

Remus, who was now standing beside Peter, nodded silently.

Peter crawled forward and reached for Remus' robes. "Remus, it's me. It's Peter, your friend. Please you wouldn't -"

He was cut off by Remus ramming his fist into his jaw.

"Remus!" Pettigrew squeaked, writhing on the ground imploringly in front of him. "You don't believe this. Wouldn't Sirius have told you that they'd changed the plan?"

"Not if he believed I was the spy, Peter," Remus growled, rolling up his sleeves. "Don't forget the stigmatism I have to endure for being what I am. He should have known better, but did they really have any better choice, other than yourself? Come on, even I could see that you would be worthless to Voldemort. What could he have possibly been able to use you for. No, I was the logical choice, and I forgive him for it. After all, in his shoes, I probably would have done the same."

"Well, Remus, shall we kill him together?" Harry said, as he too began rolling up his sleeves. "For Sirius."

"And Lily and James," Remus replied grimly. "Yes, I think so."

"Harry," whispered Pettigrew, shuffling along the ground towards him, hands outstretched. "Harry, James wouldn't have wanted me killed. James would have understood, Harry. He would have shown me mercy. I beg you not to do this."

Remus looked furious as he strode forward, seized Pettigrew's shoulders, and

threw him backward onto the ground, near Dumbledore's feet. He sat there silently, twitching with terror, staring up at them.

"You sold Lily and James to Voldemort," said Remus, who was shaking too. "Do you deny it?"

Pettigrew burst into tears. It was horrible to watch, like an oversized, balding baby, cowering on the floor and begging for his traitorous life.

"Remus, what could I have done? The Dark Lord... you have no idea what he is capable of. He has weapons you can't imagine. I was scared, Remus, I was never brave like you and Sirius and James. I never meant it to happen. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named forced me -
"

"Don't lie to me!" hissed Remus. "You had been passing information to Voldemort for over a year before James and Lily died! You were his spy, Peter!"

"He - he was taking over everywhere!" gasped Peter. "Wh - what was there to be gained by refusing him?"

"What was there to be gained by fighting the most evil wizard who has ever existed?" insisted Harry, with a terrible fury in his face. "Only innocent lives, Peter! My parents' lives. You are to blame for that. You admitted it."

"You don't understand!" whined Peter miserably, groveling on the floor at Remus' feet. "He would have killed me, Remus!"

"Then you should have died!" roared Remus. "You should have died, rather than betray your friends, just like we would have done for you!"

Harry and Remus stood shoulder to shoulder, wands raised. Neither Dumbledore, Fudge, or the crowd behind them, seemed to be making any attempt to stop them. Indeed, most of them were as angry as Harry and Remus were and they were anxious to see Peter killed.

"You should have realized," said Lupin quietly, "that if Voldemort didn't kill you, we would. Good-bye, Peter."

Several mothers covered their young children's eyes as Harry and Remus raised their wands as one and a second later brought them swishing down, "Avada Kedavra!"

Just like that, it was over. Twin jets of green light, and the sound of rushing death as it sped towards Peter, hitting him square in the chest, and he was dead. As he fell to the ground, lifeless eyes still open, with a look of terror etched upon his face, more than a few people screamed.

Harry glanced at Gabby behind him. She seemed oddly quiet, with a blank stare on her face as she looked down at Peter. "Are you alright, Love?"

Gabby didn't answer for a moment. At first, she thought that they were going to cart Peter off to Azkaban, and have Sirius released, but as the story unfolded, it seemed plainly obvious that would probably be too much to hope for, even if he recieved the Dementor's Kiss. What she hadn't expected though, was Harry doing the deed himself. She didn't think of him as a murderer, especially not considering what the man had done, but in front of all those people?

"Gabby, Love," Harry's voice whispered quietly so that only she could hear, jolting her out of her thoughts as his breath blew against her ear.

Gabby shivered, causing Harry to frown. "Are you alright, Love?"

She didn't look it, but she smiled reassuringly. "I'm fine. It's just not exactly what I expected."

"You mean you thought that we would chuck him in Azkaban, and maybe give him the Dementor's Kiss?" Harry asked.

Gabby nodded. "Yeah, why didn't you? The Kiss is said to be worse than death."

"I don't know what Remus' reason were, but I wanted him to have his soul for his next great adventure. If I remember right, he's going to suffer more there, and for far longer, than he would have here. My parents and my ancestor will make sure of that," Harry answered.

"But how can you be so sure, Harry?" Gabby asked as she stepped onto the train. (Remus and Dumbledore had waved Harry off, telling him that they would handle the body and the press while he was trying to get Gabby's attention.)

Harry sighed. "I saw it for myself. My ancestor showed me the place where wicked souls end up. It's a horrible place."

Gabby paled. "You saw it?" she asked disbelievingly.

Harry nodded.

"Wow."

"Yep."

"What would have happened if you had let him get the Dementor's Kiss first?" Gabby asked.

"Almost the same thing," Harry answered. Except that it only takes a few hundred years for a dementor to completely digest a soul. During that time, they are in excruciating torment, but once it's done, poof! They simply cease to exist."

"How is that possible?"

Harry chuckled. "I asked that too, when my ancestor first told me. He looked at me, whacked me in the head with his staff, and told me that since dementors were once human, they are able to travel within this plane. Their powers though, are from the spirit realm. After being cursed, the Shadow Magi did horrible, gruesome things, that brought them to the very gates of the spirit realm itself. Unfortunately for them, being drawn to the darkness as they were, they had come upon the gates of death. The veil that they discovered is still there, in the exact spot. The ministry was built around it, several miles underground. Now, it stands alone in a room within the Department of Mysteries. Anyways, after studying it, they began to use it's powers to drain the happiness from those around them, and they started tearing souls from their victims, while in their shadow form. No one knows exactly how, but eventually the dark spirits that guarded the realm of death became very angry, and were able to cross over into this world, where they fought the shadow magi. This is where it gets wierd. See, the shadow magi, and the dark spirits disappeared, but the race of dementors had been born. According to my ancestor, the shadow magi were forced to allow their powers to consume them, which ultimately devoured their own souls, in order to win the battle. They took the dark spirits into themselves, just as they did to the souls of their victims. Because of this, dementors can freely cross the veil of death, and they retain the power to destroy immortal souls by devouring them."

Gabby looked awestruck. Harry however, had found his usual compartment at the end of the cabin, and opened the door, only to see Hermione already inside.

Harry looked at the empty seat across from her, his heart leaping in excitement at seeing his other best friend again. "Anyone sitting

there?" he asked, pointing to the empty seat. "Everywhere else is already full."

Hermione shook her head, and Harry and Gabby sat down across from her. Outside, the Weasley twins were their usual selves, not put out in the least by what had happened.

They had leaned out of the window for Mrs. Weasley to kiss them good-bye, and their Ginny began to cry.

"Don't, Ginny, we'll send you loads of owls."

"If that doesn't cheer you up, we'll send you a Hogwarts toilet seat."

"George!"

"Only joking, Mom."

"He meant that I'll send you one. Which color would you like? Modern or antique?" Harry said as he leaned out his own window. Gabby giggled.

"Harry!" Ginny squealed. "Oh, please owl me, won't you?"

"Of course he will," Gabby remarked, poking her head out the window. "We both will."

"I wish I could go with you guys, but I'm still too young," Ginny said sadly.

"Cheer up," Harry said. "Just think about next year, when you'll likely be sitting right here beside us, off to your first year at Hogwarts too."

"But that's not for a whole year," Ginny complained. "I'm going to miss you all."

"Awe, well we will still owl you, and tell ya what, come here real quick," Harry said.

Ginny rushed forward to him and he placed a portal stone in her hand. Looking at her confused look he answered her unspoken question. "Anytime you want to see us, and we aren't in class, just roll this over twice and say 'Prongs'. It will transport you to our the

mansion that is inside of our trunk. Whenever we are studying we will likely be there."

"Oh, thank you, Harry!" Ginny said.

"So, see you soon?" Harry asked with a grin.

Ginny nodded her head vigorously. "I'll see you tonight."

"That's better," Gabby said. "But you really should be going now, the train will be leaving at any moment. We are already late as it is."

As if the conductor was thinking along the same lines, the train suddenly began to move, and Ginny hurried back to her mother as Harry and Gabby watched out the window.

Mrs. Weasley stood there waving and Ginny was running to keep up with the train until it gathered too much speed. Then she too fell back and waved. Harry watched them both disappear as the train rounded the corner and houses flashed past the window. Harry felt a great leap of excitement. In a few short hours, he would finally be back at Hogwarts!

Just then, Hermione looked up from her book. "My name is Hermione Granger, by the way. Who are you?"

"I'm Harry," he answered. "Harry Potter. Beside me is my lady Gabrielle."

"Are you really?" said Hermione. "I know all about you, of course. I got a few extra books for background reading, and you're in Modern Magical History, The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts, and Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century."

"Am I really?" said Harry, amused. 'Same old Hermione. I'm glad some things never change, at least,' he thought to himself.

"Goodness, didn't you know? I'd have found out everything I could if it was me," said Hermione. "Do either of you know what house you'll be in? I've been asking around, and I hope I'm in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best. I hear Dumbledore himself was in it, but I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn't be too bad."

"I wouldn't set too much store by Dumbledore," Harry muttered. "He tends to make a few mistakes here and there, but when he does, they're big ones."

"Well, I don't know," Hermione said. "I don't even know how we are chosen for our Houses, but I heard that I have to do some difficult spell."

"Did you happen to hear that from a pair of redheaded twins?" Harry asked chuckling.

"Yes I did, actually. Do you know them?" Hermione asked. "Never mind that. I've tried a few simple spells just for practice and it's all worked for me, so it shouldn't be too much trouble. After all, I've learned all our course books by heart, of course. I just hope that it will be enough."

"Don't worry," Harry replied grinning. "The Sorting is nothing like that, you'll see."

Around half past twelve there was a great clattering outside in the corridor and a smiling, dimpled woman slid back their door and said, "Anything off the cart, dears?"

Harry and Gabby, who had missed breakfast, both jumped up. Grabbing his money bag from within his robes, Harry said, "We'll take the lot. We're the last one's right?"

"That you are, dears," the woman replied. "That will be four galleons, three sickles, and five knuts."

Harry counted out the gold and started handing all the sweets into Gabby and Hermione. He must have bought enough sweets to last a month. There was Bettie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, Drooble's Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs. Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Licorice Wands, and a number of other things that Harry hadn't tried before.

After the woman left with her empty trolley, Harry sat there, looking out the window for a while in silence. He was quiet for a while, watching the fields and lanes flick past. Now they were speeding past fields full of cows and sheep.

Just then, there was a knock on the door of their compartment and a round-faced boy that Harry recognized as Neville came in. He looked tearful.

"Sorry," Neville said, "But have you seen a toad at all?"

When they shook their heads, he wailed, "I've lost him! He keeps getting away from me!"

"He'll turn up," said Harry. "Have you checked the baggage compartment? It's nice and dark back there."

"Yes," said Neville miserably. "Well, if you see him..."

"Don't worry, Neville. We'll make sure to get Trevor back to you if we see him."

"How do you know my name?" Neville said suspiciously. "And Trevor's."

"I know a lot of people. But I remember seeing you on the platform with your grandmother when she was getting on to you about almost forgetting your spare sets of robes," Harry answered. He had in fact, seen it. It just wasn't the truth to Neville's question.

"Oh, well then. I'm Neville, what's your name," Neville said, slightly happier than he was the moment before.

"I'm Harry Potter, beside me is my beautiful lady, Gabrielle. And across from us is Hermione Granger," Harry replied, watching the wheels turn in Neville's head, causing his mouth to drop wide open.

"Wow. Wait until I tell Gran I met the Harry Potter," Neville exclaimed excitedly. "Do you mind if I sit in here with you all, after I find my toad?"

"Of course not, come on in," Gabby replied.

"Thanks!" Neville closed the compartment door as he came in all the way and sat next to Hermione.

"I almost forgot," she said suddenly. "Harry, did you know that Dumbledore himself delivered my letter? He spoke with my parents

for quite a long time. They didn't tell me right away, because they were scared of how I would react. They didn't need to worry, I have always known them to act in my best interests, and I love them. So when they told me that Albus Dumbledore was your magical guardian, they also told me that they had signed a marriage contract with him for me and you, did you know?"

'Leave it to Hermione to trust parents and teachers no matter what,' Harry thought.

"Yes, we know. We found out a couple of weeks ago," Gabby answered for him.

"Really? How did you know? My parents said that it was a secret between them and Dumbledore, that they would allow me to tell you myself, here on the train before we got to Hogwarts."

"Gringotts keeps extensive records of things like that," Gabby replied. "Especially since at the time we found out about the contract, we were going over several other marriage contracts that Harry is being forced into. The one between you and him was signed about a week before he became and emancipated Head of House, so the timing was lucky on Dumbledore's part. A week later, and it would have been null and void, seeing as Harry no longer has a guardian, magical or otherwise."

"Are you one of the other girls that he is contracted to?" Hermione asked. "It would just seem that way, the way you two are with each other, and the way he introduced you."

"Actually, no," Gabby replied. "What Harry and I have is deeper. We are bonded in a way that can't be broken and we can't be forced apart."

Hermione frowned. "What bond?"

"Have you ever heard of veela?" Gabby asked. Seeing the confused look on Hermione's face as she shook her head, Gabby sighed and leaned back into Harry.

"Are you really a veela?" Neville asked suddenly, shock in his eyes. Gabby nodded.

"I'm one quarter veela on my mother's side."

"Wicked!"

"What is a veela?" Hermione shouted angrily.

Harry laughed, and Gabby sat there for the next couple of hours, and explained veela, their heritage, and history to Hermione as Harry and Neville listened in. She also explained veela's powers, and the bonds that can form between them and others, including the bond that she and Harry now shared.

As he listened, Harry stared out the window. The countryside now flying past the window was becoming wilder. The

neat fields that Harry had seen earlier were gone. Now there were woods, twisting rivers, and dark green hills.

The compartment door slid open yet again, and three boys entered, whom Harry recognized at once.

The middle boy was looking at Harry with a lot more interest than he'd shown back in Gringotts.

"You again" he said. "I think we got off on the wrong foot the other day."

"Possibly," said Harry. He was looking at the other boys. Both of them were thickset and looked extremely mean. Standing on either side of the pale boy, they looked like bodyguards.

"Oh, this is Crabbe and this is Goyle," said the pale boy carelessly, noticing where Harry was looking. "And already know my name. Malfoy, Draco Malfoy."

Nevilla gave a slight cough, which didn't hide his snigger that well.

Draco Malfoy looked at him. "Think my name's funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. Pudgy, stupid face. Running up and down the train clueless, looking for a toad. And brought by your Gran. You're Neville Longbottom. My father was very surprised when he noticed that you had enough magic in you to make it into Hogwarts, he's on the Hogwarts board of Governors."

"You should be shot of this baggage, Potter," Malfoy sneered. "There are those that you want to know, and those that you don't want to be seen around in the wizarding world. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there."

'Dejavu,' Harry thought.

Malfoy held out his hand to shake Harry's, but Harry didn't take it.

"I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, Malfoy," he said coolly.

Draco Malfoy didn't go red, but a pink tinge appeared in his pale cheeks. "I'd be careful if I were you, Potter," he said slowly. "Unless you're a bit politer you'll go the same way as your parents. They didn't know

what was good for them, either."

Harry and Gabby both jumped up, wands in their hands. "Don't you dare insult my parents, Malfoy."

"Oh, you're going to fight us, are you?" Malfoy sneered.

"You have three seconds to leave," Harry snarled.

"That's just too bad. See, we don't feel like leaving, do we, boys? We've eaten all our food and you still seem to have some."

Goyle reached towards the Chocolate Frogs next to Neville, but before he could reach his hand halfway across, Gabby had raised her wand and cried, "Impedimenta!"

Harry looked at her, amazed as Goyle was blasted up against the wall. "Where did you learn that, Gabby?"

"I don't know," she said, looking confused. "I don't know any spells. I think it may be our bond is growing. Maman always said that the more we grow closer, the stronger it will be. In some instances the bonded can share each other's knowledge, and even communicate with each other in their minds."

Harry was stunned. "That explains it, then. But if you are able to know all the spells that I know, you're pretty dangerous, so be careful."

"I know, Harry."

Turning back to Malfoy, Harry asked. "Still want a taste?"

Malfoy looked over at Goyle and sneered back at Harry. "Letting your girlfriend do all the dirty work, Potter? That's pretty low." Crabbe cracked his knuckles menacingly.

Harry shrugged. "Well, if you insist." Pointing his wand at them both, he raised it above his head and brought it swishing down, Bombarda!

Malfoy and Crabbe both keeled over, like someone had hit them hard in the gut.

Harry kept his wand aimed at them. "Evanescio!" Their robes vanished. "Petrificus Totalus!" All three were bound.

Malfoy's eyes glared up at Harry. "You were warned, Malfoy. Next time, it gets serious. You got off like a child this time. Do it again, and I will hurt you. Stupify!" And all three were blasted out of the compartment.

"You've met Malfoy before?" Neville asked, looking in awe at Harry. Hermione's jaw was still on the floor, perhaps at Harry knowing such magic, but quite possibly because she thought that Harry had just gotten them all expelled for fighting before school even started.

Harry explained about him meeting Malfoy in Gringotts.

"I've heard of his family," said Neville darkly. "They were some of the first to come back to our side after You-Know-Who disappeared. Said they'd been bewitched. Gran doesn't believe it. She says Malfoy's father didn't need an excuse to go over to the Dark Side."

"We'd better hurry up and put our robes on, I'd be willing to bet we're nearly there," Hermione said.

"Okay, so who stays in here? Us blokes, or you girls?" Neville asked.

"It doesn't matter if Harry stays in here with us, but can you give us a few moments to change, please?" Hermione said.

Neville went pink. "Of course," he replied, looking rattled as he left the compartment to go get changed.

Harry, Gabby, and Hermione all took off their jackets and pulled on their long black robes and were just finishing up when Neville returned.

A voice echoed through the train. "We will be reaching Hogwarts in five minutes' time. Please leave your luggage on the train, it will be taken to the school separately."

Harry's stomach leaped with excitement, and Gabby looked anxious. Hermione had barely put her book away looking nervous, but Neville looked the worst. Harry saw the nervousness written all over his chubby, pale face.

Before long, they crammed their pockets with the last of the sweets and joined the crowd thronging the corridor. The train slowed right down and finally stopped. People pushed their way toward the door and out on to a tiny, dark platform. Gabby shivered in the cold night air and Harry wrapped his arms around her and held her close to keep her warm. Then a lamp came bobbing over the heads of the students, and Harry heard a familiar voice: "Firs' years! Firs' years over here! All right there, Harry? Gabrielle?"

"Wonderful. How have you been, Hagrid?" Harry called out.

"Good to see you, Hagrid," Gabby shouted.

"Doin' great Harry, Gabby. It's great ter see ye both here. Welcome ter Hogwarts."

Hagrid's big hairy face beamed over the sea of heads.

"C'mon, follow me - any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now! Firs' years follow me!"

Slipping and stumbling, they followed Hagrid down what the steep, narrow path to the was so dark on either side of them that Harry

wouldn't have been able to see three feet ahead of him without his enhanced eyesight, or Hagrid's lamp.

"Ye' all get yer firs' sight o' Hogwarts in a sec," Hagrid called over his shoulder, "jus' round this bend here."

There was a loud "Ooooooh!" from many of the students as they came around the corner. The narrow path had opened suddenly onto the edge of the great black Hogwarts Lake.

Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers. "Hogwarts," Harry breathed. It was good to be home.

"No more'n four to a boat!" Hagrid called, pointing to a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore.

Harry and Gabby were followed into their boat by Neville and Hermione.

"Everyone in?" shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. "Right then - FORWARD!"

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was as smooth as glass. Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. It towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood. Harry could see Gabby's intake of breath as she looked at the beauty of Hogwarts against the night sky.

"Heads down!" yelled Hagrid as the first boats reached the cliff. They all bent their heads and the little boats carried them through a curtain of ivy that hid a wide opening in the cliff face. They were carried along a dark tunnel, which took them right underneath the castle, until they reached a kind of underground harbor, where they clambered out onto rocks and pebbles.

"Oy, you there! Is this your toad?" said Hagrid, who was checking the boats as people climbed out of them.

"Trevor!" cried Neville blissfully, holding out his hands.

Then they clambered up a passageway in the rock, following close and keeping an eye on Hagrid's lamp, coming out at

last onto smooth, damp grass right in the shadow of the castle. They walked up a flight of stone steps and crowded around the huge, Oak front door.

"Everyone here? You there, still got yer toad?" Hagrid asked. Neville nodded.

Stepping up to the door, Hagrid raised a gigantic fist and knocked three times on the door to the entrance hall.

The door swung open at once, revealing Professor McGonagall. She was a tall, black-haired witch in emerald-green

robes and she had a very stern face that always gave students the all too correct impression that she was not someone to cross.

"The firs' years, Professor McGonagall," said Hagrid.

"Thank you, Hagrid. I will take them from here."

She pulled the door wide. Many of the students gaped at the size of the entrance hall, looking around in wonder. The stone walls were lit with flaming torches like the ones at Gringotts, the ceiling was too high to make out, and a magnificent marble staircase was facing them, leading to the upper floors.

They followed Professor McGonagall across the flagged stone floor, into a small, empty chamber off the hall. As they passed, Harry and Gabby could both hear the drone of hundreds of voices from a doorway to the right, which led to the Great Hall. The rest of the school was already there, sitting with their houses, and waiting for the Sorting to begin.

As Professor McGonagall showed the first years into the small chamber, they crowded in, standing rather closer together than they would usually have done, most of them peering about very nervously.

"Welcome to Hogwarts," said Professor McGonagall.

"The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your house, sleep in your house dormitory, and spend free

time in your house common room. "The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, while any rulebreaking will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is awarded the house cup, a great honor. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours."

"The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I suggest you all smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting." Her eyes lingered for a moment on Neville's cloak, which was fastened under his left ear.

"I shall return when we are ready for you," said Professor McGonagall. "Please wait quietly."

"How exactly do they sort us into houses?" Hermione asked Harry, but he just grinned.

"You'll just have to wait and see."

From over to his left, he heard Ron talking to Dean Thomas. "I heard it was some kind of test. My older brother Fred said it hurts a lot. Something like wrestling a troll."

Hearing him, half the students, including Malfoy and his goons, went pale. Harry stepped forward, and the other students went quiet, eyes drifting upwards, locking onto his scar. Harry sighed, some things never change. Fortunately he was used to the stares and whispers by now, so they just served to disinterest him. "Ron, if we really had to wrestle a troll, do you honestly think that any first year would ever survive being sorted?"

Ron went red. "I don't hear you coming up with any ideas, O Chosen One," he sneered sarcastically.

Malfoy and his goons sniggered. "Sounds to me like at least one Weasley has some good sense, Potter."

"Want to have a repeat of what happened on the train, Malfoy?" Harry said coolly. "What about you, Ron? Care for another lesson in pain?"

Both boys gulped, causing several of the other students to snigger and point at them.

Just then, several people near the back screamed. He heard Hermione gasp, as did many of the first years.

About twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to one another and hardly glancing at the first years. They were too engaged in their argument about Peeves, the Hogwarts poltergeist.

The Fat Friar was saying: "Forgive and forget, I say, we ought to give him

a second chance -"

"My dear Friar, haven't we given Peeves all the chances he deserves? He gives us all a bad name and you know, he's not really even a ghost. We need to expell him straightaway - I say, what are you all doing here?" A ghost wearing a ruff and tights had suddenly noticed the first years.

Nobody answered.

"New students!" said the Fat Friar, smiling around at them. "About to be

Sorted, I suppose?"

A few people nodded mutely.

"Hope to see you in Hufflepuff!" said the Friar. "It's my old house, you know."

"Move along now," came McGonagall's sharp voice. "The Sorting Ceremony's about to

start."

Professor McGonagall had returned. One by one, the ghosts floated away through the opposite wall, right into the Great Hall, where the rest of the school was already waiting.

"Now, form a line," Professor McGonagall told the first years, "and follow me."

Feeling excitement in every bone in his body at finally being back in Hogwarts, the only place he had ever felt at home in the wizarding world, Harry took the lead, followed closely by Gabby and Hermione. Neville, looked for the quickest path to the back of the line. When the line had formed, they walked out of the chamber, back across the hall, and through a pair of double doors into the Great Hall.

Just as the doors to the Great Hall opened, Harry thought to himself, 'Here we go. Finally back at Hogwarts.'

Author's Notes:

Haha, I know I'm cruel. So how many of you did I have going, right up till the very end? Sorry folks! Sorting is next chapter. Anyone have any ideas as to where Harry gets sorted? Remember, I don't like to follow the normal guidelines, if I can help it. Good guessing!

Credit to JKR since McGonagall's welcoming speech is a direct quote from canon, just to make it a little more like Harry's true first time to Hogwarts.

By the way, for all of you using your reviews to complain about cliché's, I do appreciate the constructive criticism, for those of you who aren't outright flaming me, but that is the way that I think and write. Haven't you ever wondered why cliché's work so well? It's because cliché's are upfront and honest, straight to the point. I do have a roundabout way to make sure everything isn't like that, or it would have no finesse, no intrigue, but to this point where the stage is almost set, nearly everything has to be straight to the point so that the readers can understand the circumstances and the frame of mind that each character is in.

Btw, so far many have come close to guessing the mysterious power that Harry holds, yet none have been able to give me the correct answer. Remember, Love is the key. However, kudos to those very few who are getting closer and have named a couple aspects of the power he wields.

Anyways, about Remus' story. I know that many of you already know all about it, but it was a necessary add in so that Fudge, and the crowd of people on the platform, know the entire truth of what happened. It makes it all the more difficult for the Ministry to cover up. Of course, it also stands to severely discredit the Ministry. I wonder what the Prophet will have to say about it.

Chapter 7: The Sorting

Maximum Security Block, Azkaban, Somewhere in the Atlantic

Night had almost fallen, and Sirius Black was pacing the few feet around his cell. If anyone had looked in, they would have noticed that he seemed unusually healthy for a man that had been in that very cell for the last ten years. It was all thanks to the food that now appeared each morning and night, courtesy of the mysterious Blazewing.

Sirius also had a letter, crumpled and looking as though it had been read dozens of times in the past few days, in his hand, scrunched within his fist. The letter had said that he had to return to Harry today, but how?

Tonight was the first full moon since he had recieved the letter, and Harry would be arriving at Hogwarts within a couple of hours, but he was still stuck here. Was there something he missed? Some sort of clue? What did he have to do?

Suddenly, Sirius heard his cell door creak open behind him, causing him to spin with lightning reflexes, restored back to normal along with his health, towards the cell door. Sirius didn't move for a minute, not daring to hope that someone was allowing him to escape. Slowly but surely, he crept to the cell door, looking around and seein noone. Taking a step forward, he was outside his cell. He was almost free! Now he just had to find a way out.

"Sirius Black."

Shit. The voice came from the darkness, where he had failed to notice two people standing with one of the auror guards. Sirius growled in anger. They were far from the first people that he expected to turn up here, especially tonight.

"You got me, Dumbledore," Sirius snarled. "What are you going to do? Have the dementors kiss me, to prevent me from escaping again? I didn't open the door, but I wasn't about to let the chance go to waste. I need to go to my Godson."

Dumbledore stepped away from the wall and into the light, looking particularly ruffled, as if he had endured a very long day. "You

misunderstand, Sirius," Dumbledore said quietly. "I am sorry for the years that you have spent behind these walls, an innocent man, but you are free. We opened your cell, Sirius. Cornelius and I are here to take you away, and to give you your freedom, along with our most heartfelt apologies."

"Save it, Dumbledore. You could have prevented this. You cast the spell, making Peter the secret keeper. All you had to do was provide evidence that I was innocent!" Sirius cried.

"Be that as it may. And I do regret that I did not speak up for you sooner. However, had I given testimony to the fact, there was still no evidence that you did not murder Peter and those muggles that day after you cornered him."

"At least I would have gotten a trial!" Sirius yelled. "I could have asked for veritaserum to prove the truth."

At this point, Fudge stepped forward. "Now see here, man. We are here to release you, and offer you reimbursement for being so wrongly accused and imprisoned. But let me tell you, Sirius Black. I know Barty Crouch. I have worked with him for several years. The man's a fanatic! He wouldn't have given you a trial anyways, much less veritaserum! You would have just been a casualty of war. At least now, the truth is finally out. Are you willing to put all the past differences aside and work with us? We took your life away, and we want to help you rebuild it. For starters, Dumbledore has asked to accompany me with an offer. I suggest that you hear him out."

"Fine," growled Sirius. "But first, tell me how you finally found out that I'm innocent."

Fudge and Dumbledore looked at each other, communicating silently. "We found Peter," Dumbledore finally answered.

"W-What? Where? How?" Sirius stuttered out. "Where is he now, I still want to murder him for what he did to Lily and James!"

"Calm down, man. Peter Pettigrew is dead!" Fudge said exasperatedly.

Sirius looked stunned. "Dead?"

"I have a feeling that if you read the Daily Prophet tomorrow, you will be able to read the story for yourself. I believe that I Cornelius made a very good decision earlier regarding the matter," Dumbledore said. "For now, we must be going. Would you like to come with us, Sirius? You can, of course, stay if you like. You are a free man, after all."

"I'll come, but can I see Harry?"

Dumbledore raised his arm, and their method of travel became apparent as Fawkes appeared beside them. "We'll see if we can work that out. Hold on tight."

With a flash of pheonix fire, they were gone.

Great Hall, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Gabby's mouth dropped open as she looked around the Great Hall. It really was quite a splendid place. It was

lit by thousands upon thousands of candles that were floating in midair over the four long house tables, where the rest of the students were sitting.

Just as Harry remembered the feasts, the house tables were laid with glittering golden plates and goblets. At the

top of the hall was another long table where the teachers were sitting.

Professor McGonagall led the first years up here, so that they came to a halt in a line facing the other students, with the teachers behind them.

The hundreds of faces staring at them looked like pale lanterns in the flickering candlelight. Sitting in various places amongst the students, the Hogwarts ghosts shone misty silver. Gabby was 'Oohing' and 'Aweing' as she was entranced by the velvety black ceiling that was currently dotted with stars.

"Do you like it?" Harry asked her.

Gabby looked at him in excitement. "Oh, Harry. It's beautiful. Every time you look up, you can just stare into the heavens."

Harry chuckled, "Then I should take you outside at night, sometime. The ceiling is bewitched to look like the sky outside.

"That's right, Harry," Hermione interjected. "I'm glad to see that at least someone has done their reading. It's in Hogwarts, A History."

"Quiet, please," Professor McGonagall said sternly to the first years as she placed a four-legged stool in front of them. On top of the stool she put a pointed wizard's hat. The Sorting Hat was patched, frayed and extremely dirty. Several of the first years stole confused glances towards it.

For a few seconds, there was complete silence in the Great Hall, as everyone in the hall, Gabby and Harry included, stared intently at the hat. Then the Sorting Hat twitched. A rip near the brim opened

wide like a mouth, and the hat began to sing:

"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,

But don't judge on what you see,

I'll eat myself if you can find

A smarter hat than me.

You can keep your bowlers black,

Your top hats sleek and tall,

For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat

And I can cap them all.

There's nothing hidden in your head

The Sorting Hat can't see,

So try me on and I will tell you

Where you ought to be.

You might belong in Gryffindor,
Where dwell the brave at heart,
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry set Gryffindors apart;
You might belong in Hufflepuff,
Where they are just and loyal,
Those patient Hufflepuffis are true And unafraid of toil;
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,
if you've a ready mind,
Where those of wit and learning,
Will always find their kind;
Or perhaps in Slytherin
You'll make your real friends,
Those cunning folk use any means
To achieve their ends.
For those of you who stand above the rest,
United, as the Founder's sought,
Come right up, take a bow;
Let's welcome back, the Emrys House!
Long ago when I was new, and Hogwarts newly born,
The Four bowed to their Master, of old, old legend, never once
scorned.
A House he was provided, removed until the day,

The blood and magic of the Founders Four at last combined;

His true Heir would then return, the balance of magic sway!

So let us welcome back the warrior, the heir of the Divine,

Lord Emrys, please step forward, you're the first in line!

Normally, the whole hall would burst into applause as the hat finished its usual yearly song. But instead, as the Hat bowed to the now five tables, an empty one now set in the middle, the every student and teacher that had already been seated stared in awed silence at the first years.

If everyone else was surprised, that was nothing compared to what Harry felt. He was utterly stunned speechless. Harry stared up at the Hogwarts crest behind the staff table, which now had a blank spot in the center. There was also a blank banner on each side of the great hall, in the middle of the others. Harry had expected to come back to Hogwarts and rejoin the Gryffindors. He had Gabby had spoken, and they both agreed that it would be better for Harry to do his best not to be noticed, not least because of how much he hated his fame. They also knew that it was not wise to change the past too much, and Harry wanted to work out his plans behind the scenes, as unnoticed as possible. 'Fat chance of that now, the Sorting Hat just gave me away. I suppose it was too much to hope that the Sorting Hat would not recognize me as the Heir right away. Thanks for the welcome, Hat. You just let everyone know exactly who I am,' Harry thought angrily to himself.

~Harry, everyone is waiting. You can't just stand here forever.~

Harry heard Gabby's voice in his mind, but when he looked at her, her lips weren't moving. 'I guess the surprises aren't over.'

The solution coming to his mind, he quickly entered his mindscape and found a beautiful, white, marble bridge that hadn't been there before. Standing on it, he could feel Gabby's presence within his mind. Coming back out of his mindscape, Harry gave Gabby a brilliant smile.

~You like it, Harry? Our bond is maturing much faster than I could have ever dreamed.~

~Love it, Gabby. Now, no matter what, we will never be apart. We will always be connected, a part of each other.~

Gabby fidgeted next to Harry, but he could see the broad grin on her now beaming face.

~I love you, Harry. You know that, right?~

~Of course, my Gabrielle. I love you, too.~

~Still, everyone is looking at all the first years expectantly. I think you should get a move on. I for one, am starving.~

~Time to get it done, then. This really sucks, you know?~

~I know how you feel, Harry. But at least this way, it will be easier for you to get things done, at least while we are here at Hogwarts.~

~True, but I could have revealed the truth to the few needed in order to make those changes.~

~Not the board of Governors, Harry. Remember, Lucius Malfoy is on the board. As soon as you tried to make changes there, he would have let it leak, and you know it.~

~At least then it would have been on my own terms. Oh well, let's do it.~

Harry looked around again, noticing the looks that every one of the first years was now getting. Draco Malfoy's eyes were wide and he was looking around haughtily at everyone. Ron looked ready to step forward himself, hope and greed shining in his eyes. Harry sighed. Leave it to Ron to want to take credit for something that he had nothing to do with. Granted, Harry understood how he wanted to be noticed, to stand above his brothers, but he still shouldn't be dumb enough to make a fool of himself. Not much chance though, seeing as Ron normally acted well before he thought about what he was doing.

Dumbledore, on the other hand, seemed to have caught the part of the Sorting Hat's song, where it said "welcome back the warrior", and was staring straight at Harry, disbelief in his eyes. Catching his

eye, Dumbledore slowly nodded, and Harry took Gabby's hand, and they both walked forward, stopping just short of the Sorting Hat.

There was gasps all around the hall.

Harry could hear Fred and George yelling. "Way to go, Harry!" Other than that, the entire school was silent, staring comprehensively at the two first years.

After a second, the Sorting Hat spoke again.

"Welcome, Lord and Lady Emrys. Welcome back to Hogwarts. Before we begin, I must ask you to show your Head of House rings, to verify to the world your identities."

Harry and Gabby looked at each other before raising their left hands, the Head of the House ring showing on Harry's index finger, and the Lady of the House ring showing on Gabby's. As he did, the ancient crest behind the staff table began to glow, as did each of the house banners on both sides of the wall, along with every Hogwarts crest on the student's robes and badges. After a moment, it stopped. Where there had been a blank spot on the Hogwarts crest, and a blank banner hanging from the ceiling, there now showed a family crest, all too familiar to Dumbledore, who's mouth dropped.

Since he had received the letter, Dumbledore had been researching the old families, and the Ministry's records of family crests to find this particular one, but all his searching had been in vain. There was no record of it. Either it didn't exist, or it was so ancient that it had long been forgotten to the ages past. Never once did he suspect that the answer would be revealed to him at Hogwarts, and so casually, as if it was an everyday occurrence!

"Very well," the hat said. "Harry Potter and Gabrielle Delacour Potter, you are both sorted into Emrys House! After the Sorting, you will be introduced to your new Head of House, who will show you to your dormitories."

Harry and Gabby both felt a bit awkward, walking to an empty table, especially since every eye in the great hall was on them, but quickly got over it as Professor McGonagall stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment.

"When I call your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said. "Abbott, Hannah!"

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. A moments pause, and the crowd of students leaned forward eagerly.

"EMRYS!" shouted the hat.

Harry and Gabby both cheered and clapped as Hannah walked to their table, sitting down next to Gabby before turning to watch the rest of the sorting.

"Bones, Susan!"

A cute girl with straight brunette hair and already showing signs of a busty figure moved forward and slipped the hat slowly over her head.

"EMRYS!" shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit right next to Hannah.

"Boot, Terry!"

"RAVENCLAW!" The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravensclaws standing up to shake hands with Terry as he joined them.

"Brocklehurst, Mandy" went to Ravenclaw too.

"Brown, Lavender!"

Lavender Brown, as Harry remembered it, was one of the most giggly girls he had ever met, and along with Parvati Patil, was the biggest gossip queen in their year. Harry didn't know how, but the second the sorting hat touched her head, it screamed, "EMRYS!"

Harry groaned, but he could still see Fred and George catcalling after her. Ron's eyes seemed to be glued to her bum also as she walked by him and the reast of the first years, taking a seat directly across from Harry, giving him a wink.

"Bulstrode, Millicent" then became the first Slytherin. They were a rather unpleasant lot, even though Malfoy hadn't joined their ranks yet.

"Davis, Tracey!" Tracey Davis had been known as the best friend of the infamous Ice Queen, Daphne Greengrass. And although she did date more than Daphne had, she wasn't known to put out any more than her friend did. Still, she did look very cute Harry thought as he watched her move towards the Sorting hat. Within seconds the hat had shouted, "EMRYS!" She looked rather ruffled, but she joined them at their table, sitting next to Harry on the opposite side of Gabby.

"Finch-Fletchley, Justin!"

"HUFFLEPUFF!"

Finally, "Finnigan, Seamus," a sandy-haired boy, and Harry's ex roommate, sat on the stool for almost a full minute before he became the first Gryffindor. The table on the far left, full of Gryffindors, erupted into cheers.

"Goldstein, Anthony!" went to Ravenclaw. Harry didn't fail to notice that so far, most of the new students had either come Emrys, or went to Ravenclaw.

"Granger, Hermione!"

Hermione almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head. "EMRYS!" shouted the hat. Hermione was ecstatic as she sat joined them all at their table, directly in front of Dumbledore.

"Greengrass, Daphne!" Now there was a beauty. If Harry didn't already have Gabby, his eyes would have been glued to her. No wonder all of the blokes had been after her. She hasn't even grown out yet, and she's already gorgeous. Moving quietly and haughtily, as the daughter of a powerful pureblood house would, she reached the stool, and carefully slipped the hat onto her head. It took nearly half a minute before the hat screamed, "EMRYS!" and Daphne sullenly took the hat off, and joined Tracey, who was on Harry's right and side, while Gabby was on his left.

When Neville was called, he very nervously shoved his way through the crowd, nearly tripping on the hem of his robes on his way to the stool. Harry half expected the hat to take a while to decide where to put Neville, but almost immediately the hat screamed, "EMRYS!"

Looking extremely relieved, Nevill placed the hat back on the stool and made his way over to their table, sitting beside Lavender, just as "MacDougal, Morag" became a Ravenclaw.

"MacMillan, Ernie!" became a Hufflepuff, and then Professor McGonagall called out "Malfoy, Draco!"

Swaggering forward as soon as his name was called, he sneered around at the other students. He barely had time to sit on the stool, because as soon as the hat touched his head, it screamed, "SLYTHERIN!" Looking extremely pleased with himself, Malfoy quickly joined Crabbe and Goyle, who were already sitting at the Slytherin table, staring at the golden plates hungrily.

There weren't that many people left to sort by now. "Moon" and "Nott" came before the cow Pansy Parkinson was sorted into Slytherin. Harry always had hated her, and not just because she was always hanging all over Malfoy. She always had something horrible to say, not unlike Malfoy, but at least Malfoy knew when to keep quiet at times. There wasn't a subtle bone in Pansy's body.

Next up were the Patil sisters, who were both eyeing Harry with interest. Harry gulped. Obviously they knew of the contract that their father had signed with his mother, and they definitely approved. Harry didn't know what to think. It might make it easier getting to know them, but Parvati had always been right beside Lavender, gossiping. Harry didn't even know Padma all that well, seeing as she had been a Ravenclaw his first time around, but really, how different could identical twins be? Just look at Fred and George.

"Patil, Parvati!" Professor McGonagall called, still reading the large roll of parchment in her hands.

Parvati glanced once over at Harry, and rushed forward to sit on the stool with the hat on her head. The hat seemed to have a difficult time with her, but after about a minute it screamed, "EMRYS!"

"Patil, Padma!"

Maybe Harry was imagining it, but Padma seemed a bit more shy than her sister. Perhaps he should have gotten to know her before he came back, but it wasn't often that you got to know people in the other houses that well. Slowly, keeping her head to, as if to go unnoticed, Padma walked forward and put the hat over her head, but almost immediately whipped it off again as the hat screamed, "EMRYS!"

After the Patil twins, "Perks, Sally-Anne" was sorted into Gryffindor. That's different, Harry thought. If he recalled correctly, he had noticed Sally-Anne Perks giving Ron looks before he came back, and he heard rumors that she fancied Ron, but she wasn't a Gryffindor. Then again, Ron had never been able to talk to girls, but look at what he tried with Gabby. Harry hadn't realized that by coming back, he could possibly be changing the way people were, too. As he thought about it, he remembered Merlin's story of the ripples in the pond. Little changes in a person's environment could very well cause them to change their thinking, but what had Harry done that could have made such drastic changes? 'Perhaps this way, they'll hook up early. He could use someone to keep him on track, the way he is going this time around.'

Now that most of the people were out of the way, Harry could at last see the staff's table properly. At the end nearest him sat Hagrid with a broad grin. Catching Harry's eye, he gave him the thumbs up. For some reason, there was still an empty seat, besides Professor McGonagall's.

And there, in the center of the High Table, in a large gold chair, sat Albus Dumbledore, who, every now and then, would watch Harry for any kind of reactions. Dumbledore must have cleaned himself up a bit since earlier, since his robes were spotless, and his silver hair was the only thing in the whole hall that shone as brightly as the ghosts.

Harry had to refrain from scowling as he spotted Professor Quirrell too. He was looking his normally peculiar self in a large blue turban.

Next was "Su, Li," who Harry faintly recognized to be one of Cho Chang's younger friends, although she didn't look as giggly as she normally did. She had her jet black hair plaited down her back, and moved quietly up to the stool. Sitting the hate carefully on her head,

the hat took only a moment to decide where to put her. It shouted, "EMRYS!" With more than a few sets of eyes on her, she set the hat back on the stool, and took a seat at the very end of the table, alone.

"Thomas, Dean," another of Harry's old roommates, was sorted into Gryffindor before "Turpin, Lisa," became a Ravenclaw.

Now it was Ron's turn. Harry had been anxious, waiting to see where Ron would end up, half hoping that it would be with him, so that he and his old best friend may be able to work things out, but also dreading it, because he didn't want to take that kind of chance with Gabby's safety. He needn't have worried, though. As Ron stumbled forward, pale green by now, he jammed the hat onto his head. Scrunching up his face, he actually looked like he was trying to squeeze something out his arse, when the hat shouted, "GRYFFINDOR!"

Ron looked better almost instantly, and rushed to join his brothers at the Gryffindor table, taking the empty seat beside Percy, who was pompous as ever. Harry could hear him from where he was sitting.

"Well done, Ron, excellent," said Percy.

Taking his eyes off of the last first year to be sorted, Harry watched as Proffessor McGonagall got a strange look in her eye when she went to roll up her scroll. Whatever it was, she didn't look too happy as she read it to herself.

"Zabini, Blaise," was made a Slytherin, but Professor McGonagall did not pick up the stool and take the Sorting Hat away, like she normally would have done. For a few seconds she was silent, but then she spoke.

"Those of you, when I call your name, will stand up and take a seat at the Emrys house table. If I read your name out, place move quickly, for you have been resorted into the house of Emrys."

Gabby's face showed her surprise. Obviously, she, like Harry, thought that this was it. Neither one of them had imagined that there would be anyone resorted into their new house.

"Please listen while I call your names. When I am through, you may get up and go to your new tables," Professor McGonagall continued.

"Katie Bell, Angelina Johnson, Nymphadora Tonks, Alicia Spinnet, Fred Weasley, and George Weasley. Please move now."

The entire great hall sat stunned as the students, whose names were called, got up from where they were and moved to the middle table, where the house of Emrys sat. Tonks beamed brightly as she sat across from Harry and Gabby, followed closely by Fred and George, who though looking very confused, nonetheless looked pleased. They sat on either side of Tonks, who didn't seem to mind. Strangely enough, Harry didn't mind either. Although he had grown fond of Tonks, he trusted the twins, and knew that Tonks was waiting until she could get her hands on him, as she had promised. Harry was surprised that now most of the Gryffindor team seemed to have been resorted into the Emrys house, which had to have Professor McGonagall fuming, but Harry liked it. In fact it was a good thing since they all seemed to know and trust each other. The three chasers, Katie, Angelina, and Alicia, all stayed close to the twins, but occasionally stole glances at Harry. Katie and Alicia both had knowing glints in their eyes, and looked at him curiously, but Angelina seemed to only have eyes for George.

As Harry and Gabby looked up at the staff table, Professor McGonagall had returned from taking away the sorting hat, and was whispering something in Dumbledore's ear. Whatever it was, he looked as if he had conflicting emotions, but was at least a little happy about the news he had just been given. A second later, Albus Dumbledore had gotten to his feet. He was beaming at the students, his arms opened wide, looking very much like a welcoming grandfather.

"Welcome," he said. "Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words to you all. First off, let us welcome our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher! He will be taking over all of the first through fifth year classes, while Professor Quirrell teaches the N.E.W.T. students. I have just recieved news that he has also been appointed as the Head of Emrys House. Please join me in welcoming Professor Sirius Black!

The doors to the great hall opened, and striding through them, with a broad grin on his face, was Harry's Godfather, Sirius Black. His hair was long, as Harry remembered it, but his black robes looked to be fresh and brand new. Sirius had obviously cleaned himself up a bit,

and his long black hair was combed, which surprised Harry a great deal. Almost as much as seeing Sirius at Hogwarts in the first place, even though Harry had known that it couldn't be long until they released him. He certainly wasn't expecting anything like this. Sirius was even his Head of House!

Walking up the path between the tables, Sirius stopped at Harry, recognizing James in his son, and gave him a broad grin. "Hello, Harry. I'm Sir-"

But at that moment, Harry cut him off. Harry had gotten up and thrown his arms tight around Sirius. "Sirius, I'm glad you're out. I'm sorry that it took me so long to help you."

Sirius was thrown back. He didn't know what to think. Until now, he didn't know whether Harry believed him a murderer or not. But here was his Godson hugging him tightly, and the boy obviously loved him! 'This has turned out to be a really wierd day,' Sirius thought to himself. Even more so when a beautiful young blonde rose from beside Harry, introduced herself as his bondmate, Gabrielle, and gave him a hug just as tight.

Not everyone was as excited to see Sirius there. As soon as he walked through the door, there were gasps and screams all over the hall, as students pointed at him and took out their wands. Snape, however, stayed quietly in his seat, staring coldly at Sirius, with a look of deepest loathing. Even more people shouted and stood, backing away from Sirius, when he approached Harry. Draco Malfoy's look of extreme pleasure turned to shock as Harry embraced Sirius. Like many people in the great hall, Draco was stunned at the familiarity Harry showed. After all, everyone knew that Sirius Black was a mass murderer, and betrayed Harry's parents to boot!

Dumbledore however, had been expecting the reaction, and taken out his wand, shouting over the crowd of students that were panicking. "Silence," but nobody was listening.

"SILENCE!" It took several purple sparks shouting out of the tip of Dumbledore's wand, each with a loud bang, to finally get everyone's attention. "Professor Black, would you kindly take your seat at the staff table."

Still having his arm around Harry's shoulder, Sirius glanced up at Dumbledore, who had a kind smile, and looked again at Harry quickly before sighing and let Harry go to walk up to the staff table. Harry might have been mistaken, but he could have sworn that he saw a tear make its way down the old Headmaster's face. Maybe there was still hope for him after all.

Before he came back, Dumbledore had always seemed to care a great deal for Harry, maybe too much, and granted, following Dumbledore's orders had never once led him into harm, but he still had some serious flaws. Harry wouldn't, no couldn't allow that to happen this time. Dumbledore had always kept a very close watch on him, always knowing Harry's every move, and forcing him to return to a home where he was miserable every summer, without ever telling him why. While in between, Harry and ranted and raved like any child or teenager, as well as many adults would, when his parents told him exactly how closely Dumbledore had watched him over the years, carefully meddling in his life. His dad certainly didn't agree with Dumbledore, but he also couldn't deny Harry's outbursts that Dumbledore did indeed seem to have developed a caring weakness for his son. That didn't excuse his actions though, in fact it made them worse the way Harry and his parents saw it. Dumbledore had several chances to tell Harry everything during those his four years at Hogwarts, but he never did. The fact remained that he had always seemed to care more about Harry's happiness and peace of mind, rather than the truth. Dumbledore had never trusted Harry, or believed in him enough, to burden him with the weight of such responsibilities that Dumbledore knew must one day fall on his shoulders.

'Well,' Harry thought to himself, watching Sirius take his seat at the high table. 'I will find out soon if he can be trusted to work with me this time around. But even if he does, I'm going to have to make some changes. He's been losing his touch for years now, and it's time for someone else to step up.'

As Sirius took his seat, Dumbledore continued to stand, speaking to the students who had yet to sit back down and put away their wands. "I see that a fair few of you recognize our new Dark Arts Professor. In light of recent events, I have offered Sirius Black a job teaching here at Hogwarts, to attempt to reconcile with my old friend for giving false testimony, which in turn imprisoned him. Earlier today, a drastic discovery was made, and I do not want to bore you with the

details just now. I feel that you will all be most satisfied reading the story in the Daily Prophet tomorrow morning. I have just a couple more notices. First years should note that the forest on the grounds is forbidden to all pupils. And a few of our older students would do well to remember that as well."

Dumbledore's perpetually twinkling eyes flashed in the direction of the Weasley twins.

"I have also been asked by Mr. Filch, the caretaker, to remind you all that no magic should be used between classes in the corridors. Quidditch trials will be held in the second week of the term. Anyone interested in playing for their house teams should contact Madam Hooch. And finally, I must tell you that this year, the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death.

Harry nodded. At least some things haven't changed.

"Now, just a few more words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak! Thank you!"

"Is he mad?" Neville asked.

"Not really," Fred said.

"But he has always been a bit off his rocker, I'd say," George replied.

"Well," Hermione said. "I've heard that he's the best wizard in the world. He's the only one You-Know-Who ever feared."

Gabby and Harry both frowned. "Hermione, not everyone is as blinded by authority as you are," Gabby said.

"What do you mean by that?" Hermione replied harshly, putting some mashed potatoes on her plate.

Harry had barely began listening to the conversation himself; he was starving. The table had filled itself with many delicious foods. There were ribs, roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon, steak, boiled potatoes, mashed potatoes, roast potatoes, fries, Yorkshire pudding, chocolate pudding, cherry pie,

apple pie, dinner rolls, garlic bread, cheesecake, corn, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup, and even turkey.

Filling his plate with some of his favorites, Harry listened as Gabby answered Hermione. "What do I mean? Were you listening to yourself back on the train? You said that Dumbledore is the one who convinced your parents to sign that contract between you and Harry, without even asking you first. And you were okay with it. You said it yourself, that if your parents and Dumbledore thought that it was a good idea, it was good enough for you. When are you going to stop being so naive? Not all authority figures can be trusted. Does it even matter to you anyways? The way you just laid it out for Harry seemed to say not."

Hermione looked irritable. "What makes you think that you have any right to judge my parents or I? If I am okay with people who know what's best for me to make those decisions, that is my choice. And if we can't trust Dumbledore, who can we trust? I've heard almost everyone in the wizarding world likes him, and trusts him. He also had some good valid points when he talked to my parents about it. Being engaged, and then married to Harry, will enable me to reach many of my goals, which would otherwise be unattainable. Being a muggleborn isn't easy, or so I've heard. The purebloods are in control, and they plan to keep it that way. By marrying a pureblood wizard from such a powerful family, Dumbledoresaid that it would help me do what I want with my life."

Harry had stopped chewing as Hermione spoke, and Gabby's mood was deteriorating quickly as she became more and more incensed. Several of the others at the table had their heads together, staring at the two girls, especially the Patil twins.

Enraged, Gabby leaned forward and hissed, "So Harry is just someone for you to use? You plan on marrying him, just for his money and influence?"

Hermione was shocked at Gabby's sudden hostility. Having burst into tears, she wiped her eyes with a napkin before she replied, "I didn't mean it that way. That's just the way Dumbledore explained it to my parents, the way they explained it to me. I'd never think to use somebody like that. It's just... I've never really had any friends before, and I was really excited when I got my letter, but when Dumbledore told me how us muggleborns are viewed, I tried to hand him back

my letter. What else was I to do? I was going from being in a normal public school with no friends, just because I love to study. I've always been a bookworm. But why would I freely walk into a whole new world, where I would still be treated that way because of my love for books, but also hated, just for being what I am! I'm sorry. When my parents explained it to me, I saw it as my opportunity to throw that life behind me. I wanted to come here and learn magic, but I also wanted friends. Even if they wouldn't like me for who I am, they would at least accept me because of who I was with."

Gabby's mouth open and shut, but no sound came out. Harry was just as speechless as she was. He had always known what Hermione's bookworm reputation did to her social life, but he never dreamed that her insecurities went that far. For a few moments, there was silence at the table, until Padma spoke up.

"What's your name? Hermione, right?" Hermione nodded.

"What I don't get," Padma began quickly, "is why you would want friends like that? They wouldn't be real friends, even if they acted like that. How bout you be yourself, and let us get to know you? Let us judge for ourselves whether we want to know you. It's not as bad being a muggleborn as you think. In fact, the Slytherins are probably the only one's who care. They're a bunch of pureblood fanatics."

"And I bet with your brains, you'll make loads of friends," Harry said. Too stunned that Harry was still talking to her to keep crying, Hermione stared at him quietly. "I bet they haven't made a spell that you can't do, Hermione. Just you watch. Everyone is going to want to know how you do it, when you figure out things that people would never see coming."

Sniffling, Hermione said quietly, "Th- Thanks, Harry."

"No need to thank me, Hermione," Harry replied. "Just be yourself. And for Merlin's sake, show some self confidence! I know you've got it in you."

"Hey Harry," Parvati called across the table from beside her sister. "How many girls are you supposed to marry anyways?"

Harry shrugged. "Why?"

Parvati looked at him and giggled. "Just curious. You know your mom signed a contract with our father, right? Padma and I are both contracted to marry you." Padma coughed, and several of the other girls had stopped eating. Neville was looking at Harry with an awestruck expression, not noticing the gravy dripping onto his lap from his fork.

Harry frowned. "Does it really matter?"

Parvati thought for a second, deciding whether to say what was on her mind or not. Then she responded, "No, not really. In our culture, multiple marriages and marriage contracts are practically a custom. We are used to it. But we haven't heard of a coven in Britain in hundreds of years."

"That's right, Harry!" yelled Tonks. A few of the students from the other tables turned their head momentarily before resuming their dinner. "I want to know how many girls I have to share you with."

Fred and George both looked at Tonks in between them, and Harry could see the disappointment rolling off them in waves. Harry grinned, but thought better of it when he saw every eye at the table on him. Damn.

Well, uh... the girls that I've already met are Gabby, she's right here beside me. Then there's you, Tonks. There's also Ginny Weasley, Hermione, and now you Padma and Parvati," Harry answered.

"What about the one's you haven't met, mate," Fred asked.

Harry looked around. He was quite sure that more than one of the other girls at the table was supposed to marry him, and he had no idea what their reactions would be. Best get it over with. "Let's see, a girl from the Davis family, the Abbot Family, the Bones family, the Lovegood family, the Su family, the Bell family, and the Spinnet family. There's also a set of sisters from the Greengrass family."

Several of the girls had dropped their forks. Everyone at the table, save for Gabby, was gawking at Harry, who simply leaned back in his chair, waiting for it to hit them.

"Damn, mate. Are you sure? Seems to me like you got nearly all the good ones," George said.

"Pretty sure, yeah," Harry replied.

Just then, Daphne spoke up. "But how can we be sure that you are telling us the truth. I mean, I'm certainly not going to just believe that I'm supposed to marry you, just because you say so."

"Yeah," Tracey said. "I bet you're just loving this. Not a very nice prank, Potter."

"I can have my auntie look up the records, if there are any," Susan piped up. "I bet she would love to hear how I'm engaged to Harry Potter at the age of eleven." The sarcastic tone in her voice was clear enough for even a gorilla like Crabbe or Goyle to hear. Harry had nearly forgotten that Susan Bones' aunt was Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

Angelina Johnson turned to George. "Didn't he mention your baby sister? Did you know about this?"

George winced. "Our dad told Ginny a few days ago," he answered.

"He also told her that Harry was coming over that night, and that's how we found out," Fred finished. "Ginny was excited and nervous about it all day, but whatever Harry said to her worked, because she calmed down pretty well. At least until Harry and Gabby left. You see, our baby brother Ron decided to do something very... distasteful, and Harry made him pay. Ron hates Harry now, but Mum and Dad both told him it was his fault. They don't blame Harry or Gabby in the least."

George turned to Harry, "Yea, I forgot to mention that. Mum and Dad wanted me to pass that message to you, and to tell you that you are welcome back to the Burrow at any time. Mum made Ron swear that he would mind his manners next time. You should have heard Mum and Ginny go at him. I didn't know Ginny could yell like that, but she gave Mum a run for her money. I tell ya Harry, I don't envy you, if you're ever on the receiving end of Ginny's temper. Right scary, she is."

Harry chuckled, looking around at everyone. Half of them were still in shock, and a few of them, namely Daphne, Tracey, and Susan,

were eyeing him were slight distrust, but the rest of them looked very interested, for various reasons.

"Susan."

"Yeah, Harry?"

"How about I do you one better. Once we get to the dormitory, I can hand you all of the contracts. You can find a way to try and break them if you want, even though the goblins told me that it was impossible to break any of them."

Susan was stunned. Tracey's jaw dropped. But Daphne still gave Harry a look of cold indifference. "Why would you want to break them," Daphne asked. "You're a bloke, I bet you're loving this."

"No he's not," Gabby said hotly. "I was there with him when we both found out. Before that, it was just him and me. The first thing he asked was how to break the contracts, and it wasn't easy to get him to agree to fulfill them honorably when the goblins told him it was impossible. Even after that, it took me over a week to get him to accept it. You saw him a second ago. He's still trying to figure out a way out this this whole situation."

Unconvinced, Daphne retorted at Harry, "Why is that? Why did you give in, just to try to weasel out of it again?"

"I never fully gave in," Harry replied. "I accepted the fact that there was a good chance that I had no choice in the matter. But I still believe that every one of us, Gabby and myself included, should have the right to choose who we love and get married to. I don't want to force myself onto anyone, and I refuse to do it. Just because I gave you the knowledge that the contract exists, and is inescapable, doesn't mean that any of us have to let it control our choices. I simply decided to go with the flow, to get to know each and every girl that I'm supposed to marry, and hopefully forge some kind of bond, a relationship. I haven't given in, I merely decided that if I have to do it, it will be under my own terms, not any one else's. Don't we all deserve that option?"

Daphne was still scowling when he finished answering her, but Harry could see something flicker in her eyes. Daphne was used to having to hide her true emotions, being brought up as she was. She

was used to having to see through the masks that various people wore when they came around her family, after all, the Greengrass's were a powerful, but neutral pureblood family. Daphne was born and raised a critic. Harry knew this much from before he came back, but that's about all anyone had known about the infamous Ice Queen of Slytherin, except for her best friend Tracey.

"You mean you have actual proof?" Susan asked incredulously.

Harry smirked. "I have the official contracts themselves. You can all take a look if you want." Several of the girls murmured between themselves. Susan's eyes widened.

As students were finishing their meals, the noise level in the great hall began to steadily rise again. After everyone was finally done, Dumbledore stood up. The talking ceased at once. "Ahh! Now that you are all fed and watered, it's off to bed! I'm sure none of you would like to miss your first classes in the morning. Off you trot!"

There was the usual scraping of hundreds of chairs as students and teachers got up, and made their way out of the great hall, headed to their dormitories.

"Emrys house, to me!" Sirius' voice called over to them from a door at the back of the great hall, beckoning them to him. It took a few minutes, and a few bumps as they each made their way through the throng of students, but finally they were all standing next to Sirius.

"Okay, first off, my name is Sirius. I doubt that any of you trust me, except perhaps Harry, but if you ever need anything, I am here to help you, to teach you. Please don't ever be afraid to come to me with any problems you need help with, because that's what I am here for. Now if you would please follow me, and make your way through this door. The Sorting Hat was kind enough to provide me with the location of your new quarters."

They all started through the door behind Sirius, as he watched them to make sure none fell behind, but Harry felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Professor McGonagall. "Not you, Mr. Potter. Professor Dumbledore would like to see you in his office at your earliest convenience."

As if Harry hadn't been expecting it. He gave Sirius a look that spoke volumes about what he was thinking at that exact moment before turning to follow Professor McGonagall to Dumbledore's office.

They marched in silence out through the great hall, through a few corridors, which were dark, damp, and lit by torches, until finally, they stopped stopped before a large and extremely ugly stone gargoyle.

"Lemon drop!" she said. Instantly, the gargoyle sprang suddenly to life and hopped aside as the wall behind him split in two. Behind the wall was a spiral staircase that was moving smoothly upward, like an escalator. Harry had never failed to be amazed every time he had gone to Professor Dumbledore's office. As he and Professor McGonagall stepped onto the rotating staircase, Harry heard the wall thud closed behind them. They rose upward in circles, higher and higher, until at last, slightly dizzy, Harry saw the gleaming oak door of Dumbledore's office, just ahead, with a brass knocker in the shape of a griffin.

A moment later, they stepped off the stone staircase at the top, and Professor McGonagall rapped smartly on the door.

"Come in." Harry could hear Dumbledore's voice, along with Fudge's, on the other side of the door which opened silently for Harry, and he entered.

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

"Ah, Harry! How was the train ride here?"

"It was... decent," Harry answered curtly, stepping into Professor Dumbledore's office. Harry had always been impressed, each time he came to the headmaster's office.

The office was a large and beautiful circular room, full of funny little noises. A number of curious silver instruments and dark detectors stood on spindlelegged tables, whirring and emitting little puffs of smoke. The walls were covered with portraits of old headmasters and headmistresses, all of whom were currently snoozing gently in their frames. There was also an enormous, claw-footed desk, and, sitting on a shelf behind it, was the shabby and tattered Sorting Hat.

Harry turned to close the door. Standing on a golden perch behind the door was a handsome red and golden phoenix, Fawkes.

"Hello, Fawkes," Harry said, as he stroked the phoenix's head. Turning once more, Harry faced Dumbledore, who was seated behind his desk, and Fudge, who was in a squashy armchair on Harry's side of the desk. What surprised Harry, though, was that he also noticed Professor Flitwick, invisible, and seated near the wall. Harry had a vague idea of what professor Flitwick was doing there, but Harry sincerely hoped he was wrong, even as he felt a very subtle probe on the outside of his mental barriers.

Before Merlin taught Harry anything else, he taught him occlumency. When Harry asked why, Merline pointed out that a well organized mind was able to learn and apapt far quicker, and retain things much easier. Learning occlumency would increase the speed of Harry's training tenfold.

When Merlin had taught him Occlumency, he had said that emptying your mind of all thoughts, feelings, and emotions was just one way, the more difficult way, to keep a legilimens away from your thoughts.

By emptying his mind, an occlumens created an empty space, devoid of any thoughts or emotions, which the legilimens would find themselves in if he or she attempted to break into the occlumens mind. The problem with this, was that unless the occlumens was good enough to make the darkness deep, and impenetrable, as Harry's was, the legilimens could simply imagine that they were able to see, and the place would light up. The legilimens could then continue to probe, until they found what they were looking for which had previously been hidden.

For this reason, since many could never reach that level of occlumency mastery, it was prudent to teach the budding occlumens to first organize their mind. What Merlin had taught Harry at first, was how to calm himself, emptying his mind of his thoughts, learning to meditate, concentrating on entering his mindscape. Harry had succeeded almost at once.

Upon entering his mindscape, Harry had found all of his thoughts, emotions, knowledge, and memories just thrown around haphazardly. Harry was horrified. A legilimens would have no trouble whatsoever finding exactly what he or she was looking for.

Slowly, Harry spent hours upon hours in his mindscape, sorting through everything, and separating them. He then focused on creating a towering city within his mind. Full of buildings, shops, several lakes, a large fountain, a river flowing through the city, a park, a power plant, a museum, a conservatory, and even a library. Each pile, containing what Harry had sorted, Harry hid in a different place.

Harry placed his thoughts on several billboard which he had erected within his mind, while also filling several others with fake thoughts, to throw an occlumens off. Only Harry, who knew the exact way that he had organized each of his thoughts, and where he put them, could find them. Anyone else would have a lot of guesswork to do, since many of his thoughts and fake thoughts contradicted themselves, an occlumens would be highly confused.

Harry locked each of his emotions away within the conservatory, each one able to be activated or deactivated with its own level, which if pulled by anyone other than Harry, would merely rotate the large telescope around, up, and down, controlling its movements. Only the password from Harry could activate each lever's true effects.

Harry's knowledge, which thanks to his years in between was quite vast, he hid in the museum's library, which was extremely large with hundred of thousands of books. Harry filled each one of these books with fairytales, or just figments of his imagination to confuse and befuddle anyone who looked at him, just as he had the regular library downtown. The real books containing Harry's knowledge was hidden behind a wall of books, which would only move to the side, revealing the chamber behind it by pulling out a certain book, and touching a specific word on the right page.

Last, but certainly not least, Harry locked his memories within the waters of the large fountain, which was in the center of the park, in the main town square. Harry enabled it to work like a pensieve, so that he would always be able to recall things perfectly when need be. The trick, was activating the correct sequence of invisible runes that Harry had placed all over the fountain. On the outside, around the rim, all over the inside wall, and scattered over the floor of the inside of the fountain. Only by careful examination of the fountain, would one find the secret compartment that opened, containing the last

rune to be pressed, activating the fountain's hidden effects. With the thousands of runes that Harry placed, it would take a legilimens years to figure out the correct combination, but even if they did, you still had to use your finger to draw the precise swirls, in the right direction, in order to call up each memory. One false move, and the fountain would shut down, activating the town's alarm and alerting Harry of the presence of the legilimens.

It took Harry weeks within his mindscape, but in the end he filled every shop with fake thoughts, memories, and emotions to throw a legilimens off, in the event someone actually made it this far through his defenses. Flying over the city, Harry set a dragon, which could only be controlled by him, to guard and watch for intruders.

Always watchful, never sleeping, the dragon acted as a separate personality, which was controlled entirely by Harry, and could draw forth Harry's thoughts, feelings, emotions, and memories in an instant, bypassing all of the defenses and traps that Harry had set for intruders.

By now, even Merlin was unable to get a proper read when using legilimency on Harry. Finally, Harry had one spot left that he had plans for. Within the power plant, Harry placed runes all over the outside and inside of every machine, and on every gear that worked them. In the central control tower that controlled the power plant, Harry placed seven levers that controlled seven massive pistons hidden in plain sight within the power plant. By pulling these levers, Harry could release or bind his magic. It was Harry's goal to be able to control his magic at each level, also enabling him to hide his true powers if he wished. With each piston that was released, another seventh of his magic was unlocked for him to use. By mastering the use of his magic, with just one, two, or even all seven pistons released, Harry fine tuned his control and accuracy, along with the magical channels throughout his body.

When he was done with his city, Merlin showed Harry the next stage in his defenses, the wall. "The more layers you add to your wall," Merlin said, "the stronger it will be, since a legilimens would have to manually take apart the wall before he or she could get through."

The first layer of his wall, Harry spent days building. He had wanted to just imagine it there, but Merlin said that if he built it, brick by brick, Harry would be more in tuned with it, making it stronger and alerting

him to intrusion much faster. Besides, if he just imagined it there, a legilimens could simply do the opposite, bypassing the wall immediately. So Harry labored. Brick by brick his first layer went up, all around his city. Within it, Harry placed several traps and chambers, designed to lure a legilimens in and trap them there. After the first layer, Harry used cinderblock, then cement, then titanium, and next he used crystal. Each layer of wall, Harry used different materials, warding each layer and adding several traps and chambers to each one. Harry also made sure that the wards on the walls went all the way down through the ground, and over the top, covering Harry's entire mindscape, as if it were a large dome, sitting on a huge piece of land, just floating in the impenetrable darkness of Harry's mind. When he was finally done, having spent a few years within his mindscape, although barely any time had passed outside where Merlin waited, Harry had several dozens layers of wall, the outer layer of which, Harry had fitted a far larger the usual number of traps, wards, and spells that would defend against a legilimens, and possibly subdue all but the most powerful of intruders. Harry also fashioned several torture chambers which Harry could actively trap other people's minds within, including legilimens, and torture them there. He could make them see whatever he wanted them to see. He even set a few of the chambers to act as fake memories, trapping the intruder there, not knowing that they had been trapped until they tried to remove themselves from the memory. Each time an intruder entered one of these chambers, the door would slam shut behind them, making it impossible to turn back.

"The final step," Merlin had told Harry, "Was to finally step backwards in his mindscape. Since Harry's mind was now free of the clutter, and his mind blank, Harry stood in the darkness and observed what appeared to be his city, floating on a large piece of rock in the black nothingness. By organizing his mind the way Harry did, the darkness was truly impenetrable, and only the most accomplished of legilimens would be able to bypass it.

Around the entire glowing globe that represented his city, or his inner mind, as Merlin called it, Harry fixed another warded barrier, made up an indestructable metal called adamantium. Though Harry made it transparent, so that a legilimens wouldn't know it was their until they ran headlong into it, the newest barrier completely enclosed Harry's city. Even so, there was always light in the city of Harry's mind.

Within the darkness, Merlin showed Harry how to summon deep fogs and mists, which covered the ground and the air. All around, Harry scattered fake memories, thoughts, and feelings to slow down any attacker. The trick was, to feed the legilimens a fake memory, making them believe that they had found the thoughts or memories they were suching for when, in fact, Harry's true memories were still hidden and safe. Harry could also feed these fake memories in a succession, even looping them over and over until the attacker found a way to stop them, slow them down, or banish them altogether. These tactics were all used to slow an intruder down, and help to alert Harry of an attack. If successful, which normally only happened against an inexperienced legilimens, the attack would be halted dead in its tracks. If however, the legilimens was able to navigate their way through the darkness, across the swamps that Harry placed, and through the deep mists that covered his city, blocking its glow and making it invisible, the legilimens would find themselves at the barrier that Harry had placed around his city, walls and all.

It had taken Harry a few weeks to understand the concepts that Merlin had explained to him, but in the end Harry was successful beyond his parent's or Merlin's wildest expectations. All three of them tried for several hours, but never once succeeded in penetrating Harry's mind, until Harry himself drew them in and showed them everything he had done, including showing them his hiding spots and organization methods.

Only Merlin had succeeded in getting through the adamantium barrier, and Harry highly doubted anyone else would ever think of it, especially a wizard. Wizards never had been much for logic, and Harry was surprised beyond belief when Merlin had used spells to separate the particles of earth from the metal in his barrier, leaving millions of miniscule holes, which Merlin then tranformed into much larger holes by expanding them with magic. It was ingenious, but Merlin had also went a little too far and immediately found himself trapped within a chamber that Harry had devised, which sucked Merlin's own memories out of him, reversing the legilimency against him, causing Harry to stumble at the vast influx of memories and knowledge.

As Harry felt Professor Flitwick's gentle probing, Harry quickly entered his mindscape and saw a light in the darkness. Far quicker than Harry's father had, Professor Flitwick banished the false

thoughts and memories that bombarded him, and quickly made his way, heading straight for Harry's city. Harry let him. Harry even removed the outer barrier before Flitwick knew it was there. Harry wanted to show Dumbledore what he was capable of, so he made a door in his wall, drawing Flitwick into it, before sealing it shut, and reraising his barrier to full strength. Professor Flitwick was trapped within a room that played several imagined memories in a loop, which would give Harry more than enough time since he had already completely sealed off Flitwick's only means of escape.

Coming out of his mind, Harry gave no indication that he knew Professor Flitwick was in the room with them.

"Harry, we are glad that you could join us tonight," Professor Dumbledore said. "There are a few things that we would both like to speak to you about, not least, where you learned to cast an unforgiveable."

Fudge fidgeted in his seat when Dumbledore mentioned this. "Yes. Professor Dumbledore convinced me earlier today not to prosecute you for it. Though I daresay, I should have you hauled in for it. You are not an auror, and had no authorization to use that spell."

"Would you rather Remus and I used a different spell, Minister?" Harry asked darkly. "There were children on that platform, and we couldn't very well let him escape again, which is what he would have done if you had arrested him. No, people like that are best dealt with permanently, where they can never commit any other atrocity."

"Still, Harry," Fudge said uneasily. "How would it look if the Ministry allowed you to cast an unforgiveable in the middle of the crowd, and in front of the Minister of Magic himself? There have to be repercussions of some sort." Looking very uncomfortable, as if this was the last thing he wanted to do, Fudge rocked himself back and forth in his chair.

"Think back, Minister," Harry replied. "You yourself raised your wand against Peter. He was a traitor, and a murderer. Every witch and wizard with a wand that was there had their wands pointed at him. If Remus and I hadn't killed him, one of them would. Do you really think it would have been better if we had used a spell, such as the "Diffindo", which would have been very bloody and messy? The children and younger students watching would have been

needlessly traumatized by the sight. As for how the Ministry will look, do you really think people are going to turn against you for it? Sure, there are a few narrow minded, uptight prats that will condemn you for it, but overall the public will bless you for it. They will praise you as a great minister, who punished a traitor and murderer the way he deserved. He did not deserve to live, and the public will praise you for your actions in allowing justice to be done, because by doing so, you acted in the best interest of the public's safety. Just tell them that you knew you were going there on a tip that Peter Pettigrew was found alive. I know it's not below you to lie a bit, and those who were there aren't likely to tell the truth. They were as angry as we were."

"And how would it look, Cornelius, as I pointed out to you earlier today, if we imprisoned Remus Lupin and Harry Potter, who most of the wizarding world view as a hero for being Lord Voldemort's downfall? You would be bombarded with Howlers, demanding your immediate resignation, especially when it leaked that you had imprisoned Harry and Remus for murdering Peter Pettigrew, the wizard who betrayed Lily and James Potter! The wizarding world would be demanding your head on a platter, Cornelius, and you know this. Harry is viewed as the hope of the wizarding world for the future, and as such, it would be prudent for you to offer a statement, saying that Remus and Harry executed, not murdered, Peter Pettigrew for his crimes, under the full authority of the ministry of magic himself, in order to prevent Peter from committing any more atrocities which would hurt innocent people. Make sure that the public knows that the Ministry stands behind Harry. Do this, Cornelius, and you will be hailed as one of the greatest ministers of magic we have ever had. You will forever cement yourself as a man of action, a Minister who always looked out for the public's best interests, and refused to tolerate any evildoers."

Fudge had winced horribly at Voldemort's name, but nonetheless appeared happier. "I suppose you are right, Dumbledore," Fudge said calmly, looking hopeful. "Thank you both for your time. I think I must be going then. I have to be quick if my statement is going to make tomorrow morning's edition of the Daily Prophet."

Harry watched the Minister get out of his chair, and hurriedly leave Professor Dumbledore's office, stopping only to open and shut the door behind him on his way out.

They were finally alone, for the first time since Harry had come back. Professor Flitwick didn't count, seeing as he was still trapped within Harry's mind, and could hear nothing of what was said between Harry and Dumbledore. Harry had raised his head, and stared at Dumbledore, who had been giving Harry a shrewd, calculating look.

"Harry, I believe we have many things to discuss, but first, you must tell me what all you know of the future," Dumbledore said quietly. "You have already, albeit very grudgingly, told me about your fourth year at Hogwarts, but what of the first three years?"

Harry was instantly infuriated. How dare Dumbledore demand Harry to tell him anything, saying that Harry must tell him! Harry felt no other probing, but he knew that it was a tactic to bring the memories to the forefront of his mind, possibly making it easier for Professor Flitwick to find what Dumbledore wanted. It didn't work. Harry's thoughts and memories remained secure, and his occlumency barriers at full strength.

"Before I tell you anything, Dumbledore, you must answer one of my questions," Harry replied coolly.

"Of course, Harry," Dumbledore said a bit too quickly. "There are, of course, a few things that I can't tell you, but you are welcome to ask."

"Why," Harry asked, fixing Dumbledore with an intense stare, "did Voldemort try to kill me as a baby?"

Dumbledore sighed very deeply. "Alas, the first thing you ask me, I cannot tell you. Not today. Not now. You will know, one day... put it from your mind for now, Harry. When you are older... I know you hate to hear this... when you are

ready, you will know."

Harry's insides turned, and he let his rage freely flow. "Wrong answer, Headmaster. My first four years, you always kept the important details from me, giving me just enough information to get by on. No more, Dumbledore. I understand that by doing so, you were giving me a chance to figure things out on my own, by people get hurt that way. If you don't tell me everything I need to know from the beginning, mistakes are going to be made, on both of our parts."

Dumbledore looked at Harry sadly, "Harry, I think you have quite enough responsibility to be getting on with. You're only eleven. You should be enjoying your childhood, not worrying about these things, which you are much too young to know. The knowledge would be too much for anyone at such a young age. How can I bear the burden of giving you such a terrible truth?"

Dumbledore, I deserve to know. It's my life. I'm the one who has to live it, not you or anybody else," Harry replied harshly. "We need to work together if we are going to stop Voldemort in the future. There is more than one other way in which he can return, and when he does, we need to be ready. That includes telling me everything that I need to know so we can plan our moves together. Don't give me that underage crap, Dumbledore. I've been in this fight a long time already, and whether you like it or not, I'm not going to sit back and watch others fight and die, not when I could be helping."

"Harry, you don't understand. There are too many 'what if's' and unanswered questions," Dumbledore said softly. "There are a few all important questions that I have spent years investigating, answers to which I still cannot be certain of the answers."

"You just said it, Dumbledore," Harry pried. "You have spent years researching Voldemort. You know Tom Riddle better than anyone. You know where he comes from, how he thinks, what he values, and more importantly, you have a pretty good idea what his plans are and how to defeat him. Am I correct?"

Dumbledore frowned. "What do you know of Tom Riddle, Harry?"

"I already told you, Headmaster," Harry replied. "I will not answer your questions until you answer mine. How else will I know that you are willing to trust me, to work with me. Only then will I know that I can begin to trust you, especially after the life you have forced me to lead thus far. Do you care anything about your master plan? Or do you care more for my happiness than my knowing the truth, more for my peace of mind than your plan? Do you care at all for the lives that will inevitably be lost if your plan fails? You need my help. Do not try to save me from more pain than I have already suffered, not at the cost of innocents that can be saved if I fight. Think of the numbers of nameless and faceless people and creatures that have already perished, and how many more will be slaughtered in the

vague future, if you try to keep me in the dark, alive, well, and happy. Your excuses are running out, Dumbledore."

"I am sincerely sorry, Harry," Dumbledore said sadly. "You are right, of course. You are far more insightful than I gave you credit for. Please allow me to offer my one defense. All your life I have watched you, more closely and carefully than you could possibly imagine. Tonight, you arrived at Hogwarts, Harry, safe and while, as I have planned and intended. You have arrived here at Hogwarts, not as happy as I would have liked, perhaps. You have suffered. I knew the night when I left you on your aunt and uncle's doorstep that I was condemning you to ten dark and difficult years. Still, you have arrived here alive and healthy. You are not a pampered little pureblood prince, as any wizarding family would have likely raised you as, but as normal a boy as I could ever have hoped for."

Dumbledore paused to unstick two lemon drops before popping one in his mouth, and Harry said nothing. He continued to listen to Dumbledore's explanation, not sensing any sign of deception. What was strange, was that a moment before he began to speak, Dumbledore had lowered all of his occlumency barriers, as if he knew that Harry knew legilimency and wanted Harry to trust him fully.

"You might ask, and with very good reason, why it had to be so. Why couldn't some wizarding family take you in, besides the obvious reason that I just gave you. Many families would have been more than glad to take you in, would have considered it an honour, delighted to raise you as a son. My answer is that my priority is, and always has been, to keep you alive. You were in more danger than perhaps anyone than I had just gone not hours before, but there were still death eaters out there. Many of his supporters were almost as terrible as Voldemort himself, even if they were not nearly as powerful. They were angry, desperate, and violent. They wanted to kill you, Harry. I had to make a decision, with regard also for the years ahead. I knew then, and that day at the Leaky Cauldron you proved me right, that Voldemort is not truly gone. No matter how long it took him, I knew that he would return, and he would not rest until he killed you. Lord Voldemort, Harry, is probably the most brilliant student that ever walked the halls of Hogwarts. Voldemort disappeared after leaving the school, traveling far and wide, sinking so deeply into the Dark Arts, and consorted with the very worst of wizards. Before Tom Riddle resurfaced as Lord Voldemort, he underwent so many dangerous, magical transformations, that when

he did finally resurface, he was barely recognizable. Hardly anyone connected Lord Voldemort with the clever, handsome boy who was once Head Boy here."

Dumbledore paused once more, and Harry leaned forward, intent on not missing anything that Dumbledore told him. "What does that have anything to do with it, Headmaster?"

"Harry, I knew that Voldemort's knowledge of magic is perhaps more extensive than any wizard alive. Not even I can boast to know more of the subtle variations and intricacies of magic than he. He has several powers that I will never have, and although I can hold my own against him, it is for different reasons. My knowledge of spells and creativity is easily above par with Voldemort's own. I knew then that even my most complex and powerful protective spells and charms were highly unlikely to last long if Voldemort ever returned to full power, but I also knew where he was weak. So I chose. You were to be protected by a powerful ancient magic of which Voldemort knows, despises, and which he has always underestimated, to his cost. That night that Voldemort tried to kill you, your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark, giving you a powerful lingering protection, which resides in your very skin. Voldemort never expected this, a protection that flows in your veins to this very day. Therefore, I put my trust in your mother's blood. I delivered you to her sister, her only living relative."

"You made a mistake there, Dumbledore," Harry interrupted darkly, his temper rising at once. "My aunt doesn't love me. She doesn't give a damn about me, never did."

"But she took you," Dumbledore cut in. "She may have taken you in grudgingly, furiously, unwillingly, bitterly, yet she still took you, and by doing so, she sealed the charm that I had placed on you. Your mother's sacrifice made the bond of blood the most powerful shield against Voldemort that I could give you. While you can still call home the place where your mother's blood dwells, Voldemort cannot touch or harm you in any way. He could look directly at you through your window, and he would never know you were there. Voldemort shed your mother's blood, but it lives on through you and her sister. Her blood became your refuge. Your aunt knows all this, because I explained to her what I had done in a letter that I left, with you, on

her doorstep. Your aunt knows that allowing you to live there may well have kept you, and the Dursley's alive, since while you are there, they cannot be found."

Dumbledore paused to look out the window. Harry watched as a tear rolled down his eye, and Dumbledore looked every bit his age.

"Please forgive me, Harry. Until now, I could not bear to bring myself to add another burden to you, the greatest one of all. Voldemort tried to kill you when you were a baby because of a prophecy made shortly before your birth. Although he knew the prophecy had been made, he did not know its full contents. He intended to kill you, while you were still a baby, believing that in doing so, he was fulfilling the terms of the prophecy. While this was true, it was not meant the way he planned. Voldemort discovered, again to his cost, that he was badly mistaken, when the curse intended to kill you backfired."

Dumbledore got to his feet and walked past Harry to the black cabinet that stood beside Fawkes 's perch. He bent down, slid back a catch and took from inside it a shallow stone basin, carved with runes around the edges. Dumbledore walked back to his desk, placed the Pensieve upon it, and raised his wand to his own temple, intending to remove a memory, but Harry stopped him with a hand on his arm.

"I know the prophecy, Dumbledore," Harry said softly. Dumbledore stood there, looking thunderstruck. "I already knew everything that you just told me, I just needed to be sure that you would willingly tell me everything this time around. Only then could I know that I could trust you to tell you what I know."

Dumbledore slowly sank back into his chair, "Does this mean that you will tell me what you know, Harry?"

"Do you think that we can work together?" Harry shot back.

"I cannot tell you every detail of my plans, Harry," Dumbledore answered quietly. "But I do promise to give you all the information I have that is consequential to what you must do."

"Then we are agree, Headmaster," Harry said. "You can take the Elder Wand away from your temple now. There is no need for you to remove any of your memories tonight."

If Dumbledore wasn't surprised enough, the fact that Harry knew he had the Elder Wand was enough to give him a heart attack. "How do you know about my wand, Harry?"

"Merlin told me," Harry said simply. Over the next hour, Harry told the headmaster everything about his first four years at Hogwarts, leaving out any personal information, of course. He also told him what had happened after he was hit with the killing curse while in the graveyard, and about meeting Merlin and his parents while in between. (Harry had purposefully failed to mention this while they were all at the Leaky Cauldron.) Harry told him of the Founder's Prophecy, and that he, Harry, was the heir of Merlin, and all four of the founders. Not like Dumbledore wouldn't have guessed it from the sorting earlier that night. Finally, Harry told Dumbledore of Voldemort's horcruxes, along with Harry's own intense training, as well as a very small bit of Merlin's own plan that he had devised to help Harry achieve the goals which had been set.

"So by coming back, you intend to return Avalon to the mortal realm, destroy Voldemort, and bring a balance back to magic, is that right?" Dumbledore asked curiously. His eyes were twinkling madly now.

"That's about it, Dumbledore," Harry replied as if doing it would be the easiest thing in the world. "Don't forget that I also plan to change the wizarding world. There is far too much corruption, mistreatment of non-humans, and prejudice against those who aren't muggleborn. That is all going to change, Dumbledore. You have long spoken of doing these things, but you have never acted. You have yet been unwilling to rock the boat, so to speak. I am not so unwilling."

"Harry, to institute the changes required, you would have to overthrow the Ministry," Dumbledore said alarmed.

"If I have to, then I will," Harry answered. "The goblins are already on my side. Before long, Remus will have the strength to take care of Greyback, after which, I will undoubtedly have the support of the werewolves also. So if it comes to all out war, I will win. I really hope that it does not come to that, however. I do have the votes of every family that I am the head of, and I am quite confident that if I can get the parents of all the girls I am contracted to, along with my friends, to vote my way, I can pretty much control the wizengamot. After all, I personally control the votes from nine different families, plus the

vote for the guild of Sorcerers. If I was to convince all the parents, who have a vote in the wizengamot, that would give me an additional ten families. That is not including my friends, such as Neville Longbottom. Tell me, do you really think that the Wizengamot would be able to pass any new laws without me or my approval? With your power and influence in the Ministry already, Dumbledore, we can begin making changes immediately, and I will consider leaving Hogwarts under your control."

"What do you mean, leav Hogwarts under my control, Harry? I am the Headmaster," Dumbledore asked him, a touch of anger in his voice.

"I already told you, Dumbledore. I am the heir of not only Merlin, who taught the Founders, but also the heir of all four Founders themselves," Harry answered. He was enjoying this. Harry had the power to make changes in the Hogwarts staff, rules, and even curriculum, and Dumbledore could do nothing about it. If Harry had his say in the matter, and he would, he would bring Hogwarts back to its former glory. No longer would all the unused classrooms be empty. "I can control who stays and who goes here, Headmaster. I would much rather not waste my time having to monitor everything constantly, and I do agree with many of the ways you do things."

"Are you trying to blackmail me, Harry? Just earlier I saved you from a one way ticket to Azkaban," Dumbledore replied softly, looking betrayed.

"And it was very good of you to do that for me, Dumbledore," Harry responded quickly. "I could have stopped you both from taking me in, but it was better the way you dealt with it. I am not trying to go over your head, Headmaster. Neither am I talking treason against the Ministry. My intentions, here and there, are to make the necessary changes to make Hogwarts, and the wizarding community in general, a better place for us and our children to live. It is inevitable that I will be forced to step on a few toes every so often of some powerful, influential people, but I would much prefer that I have you on my side. If not, so be it. Sacrifices are necessary in order to institute change, but I, unlike you, will not willingly sacrifice others to reach my goals."

Dumbledore leaned back, listening to Harry, finally understanding his intentions, and the lengths that he would go in order to fulfill

them. Dumbledore couldn't help but smile. Here was a young, powerful, and very talented wizard, who would take the fight to the enemy. Unlike Dumbledore, Harry would not be patient and allow the political wheel to roll, while doing nothing. Harry had returned a warrior, a man of action, and it looked to Dumbledore like the very fate of the wizarding world rested on his shoulders, and Harry was intent on not letting anyone he cared about down. It didn't matter if Dumbledore thought him ready, which he now did. The point was, Harry had the resources and influence to make the changes that Dumbledore himself had been years in the making. No matter what, if Harry stayed true to his values, Dumbledore would do everything in his power to make his dreams a reality.

"Do we have an understanding, Headmaster," Harry asked sharply.

"You understand the far reaching effects our decisions could have, implementing them the way you intend?" Harry nodded. "Very well, Harry. You shall have my full support in your endeavors."

"Thank you, Professor. I do in fact have one suggestion tonight, and something I want to show you."

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows. "Indeed? What is it?"

"Remember my story, and keep a close eye on Quirrell and please don't tell Severus Snape anything that I have told you. If and when I choose for him to know, I will tell him myself," Harry replied. "Also, I wanted you to see this."

"Of course I will keep your confidence. It is your right, not mine, to tell Professor Snape of your life," Dumbledore answered. "Now what is it that you wanted to show me?"

"This," Harry replied, taking out the stone that he had taken from his vault.

"Oh gods. Harry is that?" Dumbledore looked thoroughly impressed, and extremely anxious to examine the stone in Harry's hands.

"It is, Professor," Harry said, handing Dumbledore the stone. "In your hands, is the only true Philosopher's Stone ever created. Merlin himself made it."

~Harry, are you there?~

~I'm here, Love. Dumbledore decided that he wanted to drill me for information, but we are almost done. How's everything going on your end?~

~Great, but I miss you, Harry. Please try to hurry up. Everyone else is still awake in the common room, Sirius too. You won't believe this place, Harry! It's beautiful. We each have our own rooms, but I prefer being cuddled next to you all night.~

~I'll try, Gabby.~ Harry thought back as he chuckled quietly to himself. ~Why is everyone still up?~

~Well, not everyone. Fred and George went to bed, along with Angelina. I think Neville and Lavender Brown are in bed too, but all the other girls want to see those contracts that you promised them.~

~Will you tell them for me that I will be down as soon as I can get away from here? I will show them the contracts when I get there.~

~I knew you would say that, Harry. I already told them, but you've been gone a while, and they are starting to get anxious.~

~I'm sorry, Love. I wish that you didn't have to put up with that. You deserve better.~

~You're really sweet, you know that? They don't know it yet, but we must be the luckiest girls in the world to have such a great bloke to love us and take care of us.~

~You don't really think that, Love. I'm just trying to do what's best for all of us.~

~Don't be so modest, Harry. Of course I think that about you, and I know what you are doing. I'm behind you one hundred percent, and I always will be.~

~Thanks, Gabby. I love you.~

~And I love you.~

~I think I have to go now, Dumbledore looks to be almost finished with examining the Philosopher's stone.~

~Alright. See you soon, Harry!~

Meanwhile, Dumbledore had taken out his wand and was carefully examining the stone, but to no effect. Only Harry, or his children when he had them, would be able to reproduce the stone, seeing as the final stage required the blood of one of the nine divines. But Dumbledore didn't know this. The Headmaster sat there for nearly fifteen minutes, humming softly and casting spell after spell on the stone, and looking at it under a special silver instrument. Finally, he looked up at Harry. "Thank you for showing me this. This stone is magnificent, but I cannot determine certain, important properties of the stone. I can easily verify its authenticity for you, but I cannot reproduce it. Would you like me to have Nicolas take a look at this for you?"

"No that's fine," Harry replied, reaching out to take the stone from atop Dumbledore's desk. "I just thought that you would be interested in it. I already knew that you could not reproduce it. You would need my permission for it to even work properly if you intended to use it."

"Then I believe we are done here, Harry. Is there anything else you require?"

"Just one more thing. I would like my invisibility cloak back, Professor. The one my father lent you."

"Very well, Harry," Dumbledore said, getting up once more to pull out Harry's invisibility cloak from a shelf behind him, then handing it to Harry before walking to his office door and opening it for Harry to go through. "Let us make our way to your new dormitory. The Sorting Hat was kind enough to reveal the location to myself and the teachers earlier tonight."

Just as Harry walked through the door, he made sure to release Professor Flitwick, who looked dazed, but nonetheless followed them, still invisible.

Harry and Professor Dumbledore quickly made their way towards the Astronomy tower, where they stopped, facing a long wall, empty of anything, except for a banner bearing the Hogwarts crest, as it

now showed. Harry didn't know what to do, he had passed this area many times on his way up to his Astronomy class, but he had never noticed anything here. It didn't seem to both Dumbledore, though, since he prodded the tip of the crown on the Emrys crest, and the wall simply melted away, revealing a long corridor, at the end of which was a brilliant, ashen door with a silver knob and gold inlay. In the center, at eye level, was the Emrys crest, being held up by a carved phoenix.

The head of the phoenix turned and opened its beak. "Password?"

"Harry you will need to set a password," Dumbledore said quietly. "The others are already inside, but this phoenix is the guardian of your dormitory, and once it was unlocked, it allowed the rest entry, but has waited for you so that you could decide on a password."

Harry was startled. The phoenix head was still turned towards him, silent. And Professor Dumbledore was standing there expectantly.

"Umm... how about Snitch? Just for now, until I can think of something better," Harry said uneasily, not sure whether or not it would be acceptable.

To Harry's surprise, the phoenix nodded and its eyes glowed fiery red, and the door opened silently.

"Goodnight, Harry," Dumbledore said, looking down at Harry through his half moon spectacles. "This is where we part."

"Goodnight, Sir," Harry answered as he walked through the door.

"Well, Filius," Dumbledore began as the door to the Emrys house closed, turning to face the now visible Charms Professor. "How did it go?"

The tiny Professor Flitwick looked up at Professor Dumbledore and replied squeakily. "Headmaster, you set me against a master Occlumens. He himself lowered his mental shields in order to draw me in, I believe to show me of what he is capable. He locked me in a loop of rather comical memories that I am quite sure were fraudulent, and did not release me until you were both leaving your office to head here. I do not recommend attempting to pry anything from him using Legilimency ever again, Headmaster. He would know

immediately, and could easily hold you yourself hostage within his mind long enough to contact the authorities, and you would not succeed in your attempts either way. His defenses are more pronounced than anything I have ever seen. I myself will be redoing my own, following his example."

"So you found out nothing, Filius?"

"Nothing at all, Headmaster," the tiny Professor squeaked.

"Then it is as I suspected. Thank you for your efforts in this, Filius," Dumbledore said resignedly.

"Not at all, Headmaster. Glad to be of service!"

Dumbledore turned away and headed back to his office, deep in thought, as Professor Flitwick headed off to the Charms corridor.

Emrys Common Room, Astronomy Tower, Hogwarts

Noise erupted around him the second Harry walked through the door, and into the huge common room of the Emrys house.

Looking around, Harry saw that in front of him was a large fireplace, with a pot of floo powder shimmering next to it. There were four hallways, two on each side, leading to the rooms. Beside the fireplace, hanging on the wall was a bulletin board, which hung just behind a large Emrys banner. In front of the fireplace, a large, ornate, oaken coffee table was placed in the middle of two huge, sectional couches that looked exceptionally comfortable, both being solid black, with silver and emerald inlay, with very fluffy, matching black and golden pillows, strown about the couches where all the girls had been seated, chatting amongst themselves. Harry also noted a hottub off in the corner, seperated from the rest of the room by sparkling black onyx tiles going out from it on both sides not connected to the wall for about five feet. On each side of the wall, in between the four corridors, a love crimson love seat sat, pushed against the wall. There were also three, very cushy looking armchairs. One set with its back now to the fireplace, courtesy of Sirius, who now sat in it. The second was in front of a table near the wall, that looked to be a prime spot to do homework. The third sat right underneath the torch to Harry's left, as he entered the common

room, sitting beside a tall, mahogany bookcase that currently housed a few dozen books.

"Harry," Daphne began, getting up from her spot in between Tracey and Gabby. Daphne approached Harry with a dangerous look in here eye. "You promised us that you would give proof to back up what you told us earlier. Where is it?"

"Calm down, it's not my fault you don't have it by now," Harry answered hastily. "Dumbledore wanted to see me."

"That's not our problem, is it Harry?" Tracey replied as she, too, got up and advanced on Harry, followed quickly by Gabby who reached Harry's side and took his hand. The other girls nodded, except for Tonks and Hermione.

"You'll get your proof," Gabby shot at them heatedly. "How about you give Harry some space, and a little time to get it for you? Merlin, he barely walks in the room and you start in on him. You haven't even given him a chance to do anything yet!"

Daphne looked unphased by Gabby's increasing voice volume as her temper rose, but Tracey looked a bit unsettled. Nonetheless, they both took a few steps back, and let Harry pass.

"Go on then. Get the stupid contracts. Just make sure you don't do anything funny with them, like change some names," Daphne said coldly.

Harry hurried by her, following Gabby to their room, where their trunk had already been set up. Surprisingly, the door to their room had a lock on it, and a king sized bed pushed up against the wall next to the window, with brilliant red bed curtains. Beside Harry, directly in front of the foot of the bed, was a desk, already equipped with an eagle feather quill and ink. Next to it, a large dresser stood, where Gabby had already organized their clothes.

Harry leaned down and, opening his trunk, laid his invisibility cloak carefully inside, while removing his copies of the marriage contracts to the girls that were waiting for him in the common room. The ones for Ginny and Luna he left in his trunk. He would prefer to leave the one for Daphne's sister in there as well, but seeing as it was a double contract, like the Patils, he was unable to do so, without

leaving Daphne's in there also. That didn't seem like such a good idea to Harry.

"Well?" Harry heard Daphne's voice come from behind him. "Have you got them?"

"Yeah, I do," replied Harry as he leaned back up with the contracts in hand. "They're right here."

Daphne frowned as Harry handed them to her, and he and Gabby followed her back out to the common room, where Sirius watched her hand them out eagerly. Harry stood beside where Sirius sat, still having a firm grip around Gabby's waist.

"I got a letter from Remus, Harry. Just earlier, right after we got here. The owl was sitting on the table waiting for me." Harry glanced knowingly at Sirius.

"Does that mean?" Harry began, but Sirius cut him off.

"That letter explained a lot to me, Pup. But there are still a few things that confuse me. I guess we will just have to take some time to talk about it."

"Sure thing, Sirius," Harry said excitedly.

Sirius chuckled quietly to himself for a second before he looked thoughtful, watching the girls' eyes widen in shock, a few of them squealing, each giving Harry anxious, curious, and in a couple case, angry looks. "So, it's for real then?"

Harry nodded slowly, sighing as he thought of the trouble he was going to have trying to get to know Daphne. Tracey had been in the boat with Daphne earlier, but as she read her contract, she looked steadily more excited. Daphne was as unreadable as ever, though. Harry could easily use legilimency to find out what was going through her mind, but there was no way he was going to violate her like that.

Sirius was grinning broadly now, and slapped Harry on the back. "Oh, what Lily would think! James would be very proud of you, Harry. Having to marry all of these girls. He might pity you a bit too, though.

Well done!" Sirius continued to grin happily, even as several of the girls gave him reproving glares.

Harry noted the conflicting emotions showing clearly in several of their eyes. "How about you all take a look at these tonight? Keep them. I won't force myself onto any of you, no matter what these contracts say. I just thought that it would be a good idea for you to all know about them, just in case. The sooner the better, I thought. It would give us more time to get to know each other, and decide what to do about them."

A few of them, Daphne, Tracey, Susan, and Hannah, all nodded softly before quietly disappearing to their rooms. Su Li walked up to Harry and started to give the contract back to him.

"Keep it, it's yours," Harry said into her ear. She smiled shyly.

"I don't need it, Harry. I believe you," she replied as she blushed, brushing her long, smooth black hair out of her face and gave him a peck on the cheek as Tonks looked from from where she now stood beside Harry.

"Keep it anyways." Su Li nodded and quickly disappeared, headed to bed.

"Wotcher, Harry!"

"Hey Tonks," Harry answered tiredly.

"Do I get a kiss too? Please? One goodnight kiss is all I want," Tonks said pleadingly.

Harry grinned, and a couple girls, Alicia and Katie, giggled as Tonks swooped down on Harry and gave him a passionate kiss dead on the lips before heading off down the hallway behind him, humming happily.

Not watching Tonks disappear, Harry instead sat down on the very comfortable couch, instantly feeling drowsy. Harry didn't know what time it was, but it had to be pretty late by now. Closing his eyes for a moment, Harry felt someone sit on either side of him, just before he felt lips on his. Eyes jerking open immediately, Harry saw Gabby

leaned over him from behind, in a fit of giggles at having startled him. "Hey, Love," Harry said.

Gabby's eyes sparkled with mirth. "Hey yourself, Harry," she said, still laughing at him.

Harry feigned an angry look, "Do you think that's funny, scaring me half out of my wits?"

"Oh, no Harry," Gabby replied as she began to slowly back away, faking a look of terror. "I think it's hilarious, don't you agree girls?"

Harry tried to jump over the couch to chase Gabby, but he was held fast by Katie and Alicia, who he barely noticed were the ones who sat beside him when he still had his eyes closed.

"Oh, yeah," Katie agreed with Gabby, holding Harry down by his arm and shoulder.

"But it is really cute, too. I must say, I think I can look forward to being with Harry," Alicia commented, holding Harry's other arm, preventing his escape or going after Gabby, who was now leaning back over Harry, just out of his reach.

"Oh, get a room," Hermione shot from across the room, where she had an open book in front of her. "Or you can let me watch, your choice. I might end up joining you all one day."

Alicia and Katie both gave Hermione panicked looks.

"Don't mind her," Padma said, swaying her body and hips seductively as she walked slowly towards Harry, whose eyes were fixed on the advancing girl's legs.

"Yeah, she knows we're too young for any of that stuff," Parvati finished for her sister as she copied Padma's movements. Harry had two very cute indian girls swaying seductively just in front of him, and they each leaned forward to breath in his ear, and their hands on his lap, Padma on the right, Parvati on the left.

"Although, Harry, dear," whispered Padma into his ear, making him gulp.

"In a few years, we fully intend, to really enjoy ourselves," Parvati finished into his other ear, with an emphasis on 'really'. Padma and Parvati both licked the ear they were leaning into slowly before giving it an affectionate nip, and leaned back up to stand in front of him.

Harry was speechless. He couldn't believe that girls that young could be that flirt that bad. They both laughed as Harry's eyes were glued to their legs, moving back and forth between the two girls.

"Give him a break girls," Hermione laughed as she got up and closed her book. "You'll break him before we've even had our fun, and we don't want that do we."

Harry's eyes widened further. "Hermione, don't think that I can't handle all of you, but I do happen to be held down by two gorgeous girls who have seen fit to hold my arms tightly around them."

"You really think so?" Hermione asked, twirling around slowly, giving Harry a perfect view of her bum. "You want to try?"

Harry grinned mischievously. "Sure." And he jumped so suddenly from his spot that neither Katie or Alicia noticed his movement until it was too late. Harry was already up, with his arms around Hermione, pinning her to him.

Laughing, Hermione tried to stomp on his foot, "Help, girls!"

Sirius may have seen his doom, too, since he hurriedly got up and left the dorm. The girls attacked.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

The next morning, Harry awoke to find himself on the couch, underneath several snoozing girls. Daphne and Tracey were both looking down at him disbelievingly, but Hannah and Susan both walked by, and gave him a peck on the cheek as they headed out towards the great hall for breakfast.

The night before, Harry had a war with the girls, who surprisingly, managed to pin him down and tickle him senseless after about an hour. Too exhausted to fight anymore, they had eventually collapsed talking, falling asleep on by one.

Harry tried to wiggle himself out without waking any of them, but having Hermione lay across his chest with her hair tickling his chin didn't make it easy. In fact, when Harry went to try and slide himself out from under her, Hermione jerked awake.

Glancing at her watch, Hermione shouted, "Oh no!" waking everyone else up.

"What is it, Hermione?" Katie said, yawning as she raised her head.

"Breakfast is almost over! We need to hurry. They're passing out our schedules," Hermione replied as she hurried out the door to the common room, bag in hand.

Harry and the girls jumped at the news, and ten minutes later, were sitting in the great hall munching on toast when Sirius came around, handing them their schedules.

"You will have the same schedules as the Gryffindors this year, since there aren't many of you," Sirius told Harry as he handed him his schedule and continued down the table to give everyone else theirs. Harry looked down at his schedule and moaned.

Harry Potter

Monday- Transfiguration- History of Magic- Lunch- Double Potions

Tuesday- Charms- Defense Against the Dark Arts- Lunch- Double Herbology

Wednesday- Free Period- History of Magic- Lunch- Astronomy (Midnight)

Thursday-Transfiguration- Defense Against the Dark Arts- Lunch- Double Herbology

Friday- Double Potions- Charms- Lunch- Free Period

"Binns and Snape on the very first day, brilliant," Harry said sullenly. The sound of a hundred owls, streaming through the open windows above them and into the Great Hall, caught Harry's attention and he automatically looked upward, scanning the owls for Hedwig. The

other owls were circling the tables until they saw their owners, and dropping letters and packages onto their laps.

Finally, after a moment, Harry spotted Hedwig, and she gracefully landed next to him, holding the morning's issue of the Daily Prophet. Hedwig stuck her leg out for Harry to take the newspaper, before helping herself to some of his bacon.

Unfolding the paper, Harry absentmindedly stroked Hedwig, and began to read. After a moment he frowned.

"Hey Gabby," Harry said while taking a bite of toast. Gabby turned her head. "Look at this."

Gabby took the newspaper from Harry, and began to read.

Harry Potter, Boy-Who-Lived, or Dark Lord in Training?

Several eye witness reports came in yesterday, of people claiming to have seen Peter Pettigrew alive and in the company of Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived. But is this true?

One eye witness says that, "Harry Potter was standing with Albus Dumbledore and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge and they were arguing. Albus Dumbledore appeared to have a rat in his hands and then, poof! A moment later a man they called Peter Pettigrew appeared."

More than one reliable source tells us that this information is indeed, correct. But then what happened ten years ago, when the notorious mass murderer Sirius Black was imprisoned for killing twelve muggles and one wizard, Peter Pettigrew? Did the Ministry put an innocent man in Azkaban for ten years? The Gringotts spokesgoblins says that they have given the Ministry evidence for several years, proving Black's innocence, but not once, was he ever given a trial.

Lucius Malfoy, another eyewitness of the events, had this to say on the issue. "Fortunately, Black is only one innocent man that was imprisoned without a trial. We all know that the Ministry has been corrupted by several officials accepting bribes. It is my opinion, that Harry Potter, and Remus Lupin, a known werewolf, were able to bribe the Minister himself to allow them to commit murder."

The controversial murder that Lucius Malfoy spoke of is none other than the killing of Peter Pettigrew, yesterday at Platform 9 3/4. For most of the day yesterday, we at the Daily Prophet attempted to get statements from Albus Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge, as to whether the accusations are true, even though there are nearly three dozen eye witnesses, all with the same story, who can testify that Harry Potter and Remus J. Lupin did, in fact, cast an Unforgiveable, in this case the killing curse, at Peter Pettigrew, in full view of the public, the Headmaster of Hogwarts and Supreme Mugwump, and the Minister of Magic himself.

Late last night, however, the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, called me, Rita Skeeter to his office. He had this to say. "Yesterday we at the Ministry recieved an anonymous tip, informing us to the location, and form of an illegal rat Animagus. I, who happened to be meeting with Albus Dumbledore when the owl reached me, immediately went to the Platform, to verify the information. Upon getting there, the rat in question was identified by first Harry Potter, and then Remus Lupin, who admitted to having known Peter Pettigrew was an illegal Animagus since his fifth year, and had seen him transform many times. During a brief investigation, in which Albus Dumbledore and myself, along with Harry Potter and Remus Lupin, questioned Peter Pettigrew. After verifying his identity, we then asked him of the night the Potters died ten years ago, and the day in question that Peter himself was said to have died. For a while, Peter attempted to lie, but Albus Dumbledore himself gave proof that the Potters changed their secret keeper to Pettigrew."

"At this point, he became hysterical, and freely admitted that he betrayed the Potters and then faked his own death when cornered by Sirius Black. Having been a spy for He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named for already a year by then, feeding him information, Pettigrew knew that he would be killed by either side if he was captured. Personally, I was enraged at the betrayal. Lily and James Potter were well loved, prominent individuals in the wizarding community, who fought valiantly against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, before they were betrayed by Pettigrew, one of their closest friends. Pettigrew was a traitor, and he had already proved himself capable of gruesome murder, framing Sirius Black for his own crime before escaping into hiding. Hearing this, many of the witches and wizards in the crowd behind me had already raised their wands, intent on getting vengeance, so I made a choice. I authorized Harry Potter and

Remus Lupin to use the Killing Curse, to extinguish the life of Peter Pettigrew for his crimes against our community. After all, if I had attempted to arrest him, one or more of the witnesses who were watching us would have very likely attempted to commit murder. I allowed justice to be done on my own terms, punishing the guilty and upholding our community's safety above all else, rather than allow someone else to become a murderer for doing what any other decent person, including myself I might add, would do to gain vengeance for the Potters. I feel right about what I did. If anyone had a right to decide Pettigrew's fate, and cast the lethal curse himself, it was Harry Potter and Remus Lupin, both of whom had been betrayed, losing close loved ones because of Peter Pettigrew's actions."

We at the Daily Prophet were shocked at the news. After all, if anyone else had cast an Unforgivable in front of the Minister himself, would we still be walking around? No, my dear readers, I think not.

Many have viewed Harry Potter for a long time to be a shining hope, a hero, for conquering the Dark Lord. But why did He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named go after him in the first place? Surely, a baby would not be a threat! It is my belief that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named tried to kill Harry Potter because he did not want another Dark Lord competing with him. How else could Harry Potter survive the Killing Curse as a baby, when no one else before him had ever achieved the feat? The fatal Killing Curse that Harry Potter cast in front of dozens of witnesses, including Albus Dumbledore and the Minister of Magic himself yesterday told the tale. Harry Potter is a growing Dark Lord, and he has already shown himself capable of ruthless execution. We must unite. We must stop him, before we have another Dark Lord on our hands, greater and more terrible, than even He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named!

Gabby looked at the newspaper in her hands with disgust. "Have they always wrote this kind of manure about you?"

"Pretty much," Harry answered, swallowing a glass of pumpkin juice.

"That's horrible, Harry! You should do something," called Hermione from a few seats down, also with a copy of the Daily Prophet in her hands.

"I will, eventually. But not today," Harry said as he got up and threw his bag over his shoulder. "Right now, we've got Transfiguration, anyone coming?"

"What are you thinking of doing, Harry?" Gabby asked as she and Susan picked up their bags and stepped up beside Harry.

"I don't know just yet, but I've always hated Rita Skeeter. She's a foul, vile, loathsome cow that always tries to discredit everyone, even if her stories are full of lies," Harry spat. "And they usually are. Full of lies, I mean."

"You don't know the half of it, Harry," Neville said as he caught up to them, just before they exited the great hall. "You should read some of the stuff she was writing about Cornelius Fudge when he first took office. I could have fertilized my garden with the contents of the Daily Prophet if I had really wanted."

Harry and the girls laughed, especially Lavender Brown, who Harry noted, was sticking very close to Neville as they walked to Transfiguration class.

Author's Notes:

Can anyone tell yet where I am going with this story? I have purposely made the first few chapters a little misleading, but they also help to reveal the complexities of certain relationships, especially the one between Harry and Dumbledore. Anyways, I have tons more surprises in store for my readers. I haven't yet used even one of my major ones. I hope everyone is enjoying the story so far. Thanks for all the reviews!

Well done on the few that guessed that I would be moving them to their own House. I was even surprised that in one review, one of my reader's was thinking along the exact same lines I was, and laid down the very ideas that I had barely laid out before I finished with Chapter 6. As you can tell from the way the sorting played out, you know who you are. Congratulations, I love it when people are able to think for themselves, logic or no.

I noticed that there were quite a few critics of chapter 6, whom I thank for bringing their issues up. In this chapter I have given my reasons, which have served not only to enrich this chapter, but should also

answer the questions I recieved about chapter 6, especially concerning Remus and Harry's method of killing Peter. For those of you reading, especially the critics, please continue with your insightful reviews, but bear in mind that reality is never as black and white as it seems. Politics, for one, is very rarely as simple as a crime and punishment. Depending on a person's stature in the society, and the reasons for the actions themselves, many more people than you would think get off for such things.

For those of you who thought I would put Harry into other Houses, such as Ravenclaw or Slytherin. Remember how he seems to have aspects of all four houses? Many students do, but as the Sorting Hat reveals in its song for Harry's fifth year sorting in canon, that's not the way it should be. Instead, I decided to play with what I already had going, and add a bit more detail into it, creating the 5th house. It will be comprised of Harry and his girls, but also the few others that I have added in. Note that they each fit the characteristics of one of the four houses, if not more, but they will also stand together, and united. I won't elaborate on the far reaching effects of that just now, but just think about the Sorting Hat's warnings, and the predictions that have already been made in the story.

As for Ron, where else could I put him? He certainly isn't that loyal, or smart. And he definitely doesn't have an ounce of cunning. But he is very stupidly brave. He is always doing something stupid, some things which people would say are brave, without thinking. But he also has a lot of nerve when he really needs to. Besides, I'm not done with him yet.

Those of you who prefer nonstop Dumbledore bashing, read my notes for the first chapter. I prefer not to do that. Instead, I think that it is far wiser to keep Dumbledore under Harry's thumb, where he can be of some use. Dumbledore does deserve far worse than what I have done to him in this chapter, but how can I do it, and still have him willingly help Harry? Dumbledore's powers and influence is too great to just throw away. Just think of me as a Slytherin, although if I could have figured out a way, I would gladly thrash someone like Dumbledore thoroughly. Can't help it, I grew up on the streets. :)

BTW, Harry won't go dark, but he will toe a pretty fine line. If any of you readers out there firmly believe in the law, then this is your warning. Harry will not take ANY prisoners, and it will get bloody later on as the story progresses. I think I've laid out Harry's primary

goals pretty well, and more than one rule or law will be shattered to pieces along the way, so enjoy the ride.

For those of you who continually mention a screw up with Su Li, you should study a bit more. In China, as it has been for centuries, their family name is first, and their given name is second. The opposite of what most are used to.

Again, thanks to all who have left reviews. I hope you all enjoy this story as much as I do! Later!

Chapter 8: Questions

Hogwarts Castle, Northern Scotland

Harry was in a foul mood all morning. Rita Skeeter! Damn that woman! If Harry didn't already know better, he would have sworn that Rita was a death eater. But the world wasn't black and white, full of good people and death eaters. Rita Skeeter was the type of woman that loved to twist reality in her stories, in order to make everyone but herself, and the Daily Prophet look bad, unless of course she was being paid well to shed them in a good light. Rita thrived on the drama and misery that she created. She loved getting the credit for discrediting powerful figures, even when she had written nothing true about them.

Truth be told, Harry wanted to rip her head off, but that would just be proving her right, and counter productive to his own aims. Oh well, let her write whatever she wants, as long as it didn't effect what he planned to do. Fortunately, the public's opinion was one of the things that Harry needed least.

Harry looked around as he entered the Transfiguration classroom. Most of the Gryffindors, save for Ron and Dean, had already arrived and were in their seats. Harry and Gabby chose two seats in the middle of the back row, with most of the rest of their house, save for those who were above first year, which was Fred, George, Angelina, Alicia, and Katie. Besides those five, the entire Emrys house now sat crowded around Harry and Gabby, chatting between themselves quietly.

Harry leaned back, and spotted Professor McGonagall on her desk. Obviously, noone else knew it was her. The tabby cat that Harry knew to be Professor McGonagall sat stiffly on her desk, glancing around sternly at the students, waiting for the bell to ring. Harry doubted that many of the students even noticed her since her classroom was only dimly lit by a few candles.

The bell rang. Still, Professor McGonagall made no movements, and Harry frowned, while most of the first years around him looked around anxiously, as if they were expecting Professor McGonagall bursting into the room.

Ten minutes after the bell, the door burst open, admitting Ron and Dean Thomas into the room. Looking around quickly, they both appeared to be very relieved that Professor McGonagall were nowhere to be seen, and attempted to find open seats with the Gryffindors before their lateness became apparent. Harry grinned. Obviously, they failed dismally.

Professor McGonagall had transformed back into herself the second Ron turned back to face her desk at the front, causing him to stumble back slightly, eyes bulging, much to the rest of the class' amusement. Harry noticed that several students were quick to hide their astonishment at Professor McGonagall's sudden appearance, and applauded loudly.

"Thank you all," Professor McGonagall said, glancing around. She looked pleased. As far as Harry could remember, her transformation had never failed, even once, to get applause from a class.

"S- Sorry, Professor," Ron stuttered out, as Dean Thomas hadn't managed to find his voice yet. "We got lost, and Peeves..." there was a pause, and Ron gulped. "Peeves tricked us into going to the third floor corridor."

You could have heard a pin drop. The class, including Harry and Gabby, was silent. How could anyone be that stupid? Professor McGonagall's nostrils flared. Harry had only seen her this angry a few times, and it was no wonder why Dean and Ron were looking at her, then back over their shoulders towards the exit.

"What gave you the foolish," Professor McGonagall began, her lips pursed together very tightly. "the abysmally foolish idea, to listen to Peeves, when you were warned, for your own safety to stay away from there? Did you not notice where you were being led?"

Dean and Ron cowered under her furious stare, but said nothing in reply.

"Do I need to transfigure your robes into a map, next time?" Professor McGonagall raged. They both shook their heads urgently, not daring to take their eyes off her. "Then can I trust that you are able to at least find your seats, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Weasley?"

Without a word, Dean and Ron hastened to obey and Professor McGonagall had her final word to them. "Mr. Thomas and Mr. Weasley, for such foolish actions, disregard for your own personal safety, as well as each other's, I will take thirty points, each. You will both also receive a week's worth of detentions, and I will be writing to your parents. I have rarely been so ashamed of my Gryffindors."

Harry sniggered, but only Ron seemed to have caught it, and gave Harry an angry glare.

Professor McGonagall turned to face the rest of the class, who were all paying full attention to her. "Transfiguration is among the most complex, and dangerous magics we teach here at Hogwarts, and I will tolerate no foolishness. Any messing around in my class and you will leave, and not come back."

The entire class had a collective breath, looking at each other, while Professor McGonagall set them to study the theory on inanimatus demutatio spells for the rest of the class period.

History of Magic was as boring as ever. Hermione alone seemed able to resist the dull, soporific power of Professor Binns' voice as he droned on and on about the first Goblin Peace Treaty. Harry and the rest of the girls spent most of the period chatting quietly between themselves, while Hermione took notes. Harry himself wasn't worried. He had been through it all already anyways. But Harry did get the chance to spend the period chatting with Susan and Hannah, who seemed to have hit it off quite nicely.

Hannah Abbot was the only daughter of a once prominent, but dying pureblood family. Although Hannah herself had been raised with strong pureblood ideals, she seemed to have more of Sirius' attitude towards those views. A little shorter than Harry, with hazel eyes, Hannah normally preferred to keep her smooth, blonde hair up in pigtails. She looked about average for a girl her age, unlike Susan, who was turning out to be an early bloomer. She was very friendly and open, and seemed to have a happy-go-lucky, bubbly personality and valued friendship, loyalty, and hard work above all else. The model Hufflepuff, and if Harry remembered correctly, that's what she was before he came back. Harry regretted not ever getting to know her well.

Susan Bones, on the other hand, was bright, friendly, loyal, but also skeptical. Harry guessed that it came with the territory. Susan was about Harry's height, with sleek brunette hair that she normally kept at shoulder length, and was already showing signs to have a very busty figure, as well as natural womanly curves in her hips and legs. Her family had been murdered during Voldemort's first reign, and the only person she had left was her aunt Amelia Bones, who was the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Amelia had taken care of Susan since she was young, and had obviously brought her work home with her on more than one occasion, which taught Susan to be careful, cautious, and skeptical of people that she did not know. If there was one thing about Susan though, once you gained her trust, and she considered you a friend, she would do anything to help you. Harry could see that it would be useful having Amelia Bones on his side. He had met her only once before, but she came across him as a fair woman, a dying breed within the Ministry. If there was one person that he would trust to carefully move into the position of Minister of Magic, other than Arthur Weasley, it was Madame Bones.

Harry was immensely surprised at how well Hannah and Susan both accepted what they had been thrust into, along with him. Hannah was pretty happy that she would one day have to marry Harry, which surprised him.

As Hannah put it, she liked the way Harry was open and honest with the girls, and took the time to try to get to know each of them separately. She had watched him with Gabby, and saw him as very loyal, loving and protective, which was all she wanted. Well, maybe her career and a family in the future, but that came later.

Susan, although about as happy as Hannah, for many of the same reasons, also pointed out that her aunt would very likely want to meet him, especially since Susan treated her aunt as a best friend and equal.

Su Li wasn't that much of a surprise the night before. She seemed very shy, but also submissive, and Harry wanted to give her some time to think things over clearly. He wasn't used to a girl taking being controlled so easily.

Tracey, Harry didn't know about. Like Daphne, who seemed almost entirely against the situation, with every reason to be, Tracey

backed her friend up to a point, but Tracey also seemed like the boy crazy, gossipy type, so it wasn't easy for her to deny her immediate attraction and excitement to being contracted to marry Harry Potter himself.

Harry honestly had no clue where to start with Daphne, but he figured it was a good idea to allow her some time to cool off and make the first move herself. Looking over at her, at the end of the row, Daphne was wide awake, and taking notes, which was unusual for everyone except Hermione. 'Best to leave her be for the moment,' he thought to himself.

"Hey, Harry!"

Hermione's voice came from behind Harry, as he and Gabby were making their way out of the History of Magic classroom to lunch. "Hey Hermione, what do you think so far? Enjoying your first day?"

"Oh, it's brilliant!" Hermione replied. "There's so much to learn, much more complicated than just waving your wand and saying a few words. Anyways, I noticed that you weren't paying any attention at all to Professor Binns. How do you expect to pass your exams? You should at least take some notes."

Harry grinned. Same old Hermione. "There's no need to listen to the rubbish, Hermione. I know it all already. Would you like to test me on it?"

"Harry, don't get her started," Gabby interrupted. "I heard that she has terrifying study habits."

Harry laughed, opening the door to the great hall for them, but Hermione gave Gabby a reproving glare.

"My study habits are quite normal, thank you very much," Hermione replied curtly. "Besides, it couldn't hurt you to look in a book every once in a while."

"Oh yeah, Granger," Malfoy said sarcastically, as he made his way by their table. "Watch out, Potter. I heard that if you stick your nose in a book long enough, it'll really rub off on you. Who knows, though. It might do you a bit of good, just look at Granger. It hides

her teeth, and the ink on her nose does make her look a little better, don't you think?"

Tears sprang up in Hermione's eyes, and Malfoy looked pleased with himself, probably under the impression that Crabbe and Goyle would be able to protect him. "Shove off, Malfoy," Harry said coolly.

"Or what, Potter," Malfoy sneered back as his goons cracked their knuckles menacingly. "Hey you, veela. Gabrielle wasn't it? Your dear Potter has himself another girlfriend, what are you going to do? My father may be able to find some use for you, since Potter doesn't want you anymore."

Gabby went stiff, and Harry knew the warning signs all too well as her eyes changed to a hawk's gold and Harry could see the fire stirring behind them. Placing his hand on Gabby's arm to calm her down, Harry snapped viciously at Malfoy, "One more word, Malfoy. Just give me one reason. I swear I would love it."

Malfoy didn't reply. Instead he took a step forward and grabbed a bit of Gabby's hair, which was a mistake.

The second Malfoy grabbed Gabby's hair, twin balls of passionfire appeared in her open palms, which she thrust into Malfoy's chest, burning straight through his robes, and charring the flesh underneath. The acrid smell of burnt human flesh was strong, as Malfoy laid there unconscious. Looking over at Harry, Gabby realized what she had allowed herself to do, once her anger got the best of her, but Harry didn't seem alarmed, or even upset with her, but he had already taken care of Crabbe and Goyle. Every eye in the great hall was on them.

The second Malfoy grabbed Gabby, Harry was furious. Neglecting to even reach for his wand, Harry leapt to his feet, not worrying that the two goons already had their wands out. It wasn't like they knew how to use them, but even if they did, they were far outclassed. Harry didn't so much as flinch as a couple weak hexes flew by him, but raised his hand. Feeling the magic in the air around him respond to his will, Harry mentally designed an array of stunners, that his magic immediately materialized, as dozens of bolts of red stunners flew from his raised hand, hitting Crabbe and Goyle in several spots, blasting them high up into the air, and over the Ravenclaw table,

where they skidded along the floor for another twenty feet, before finally stopping on the ground, both out cold.

"What has happened here? Somebody explain this to me, now."

'Oh, great. That's ruddy, fucking brilliant. Of all the teachers to show up, it just had to be Snape,' Harry thought bitterly as he watched Snape revive the three Slytherins.

"Draco, tell me what happened," Snape's voice was cool and soft, barely held above a whisper.

Malfoy was sitting up by now, obviously in severe pain, and he pointed a shaking finger at Gabby. "Sh- She attacked me, Sir. That veela whore attacked me!" Harry had to hold Gabby back from tearing Malfoy to pieces.

"It was his fault, Professor," Harry hissed. "He provoked her."

"No excuses, Potter," Snape said offhandedly. "She should have ignored the comments. It is foolish to attack someone because of their words. Miss Delacour, you are aware of the penalties for the assault of a wizard, pureblood wizard in this case, by a part human creature of near human intelligence, are you not?"

"Part human creature? You're one to talk! Now see here, Professor," Harry retorted angrily. "If Malfoy hadn't grabbed her hair, then -"

"Mr. Potter, if I were you, I would be careful of the tone you speak to me with," Snape replied curtly. "If Mr. Malfoy, did in fact, assault Miss Delacour first, why did she not seek a teacher, rather than take it into her own hands?"

With a cruel smile, Snape turned to Malfoy. "Mr. Malfoy, do you intend to press charges against this veela?"

Malfoy nodded quickly, still clutching at his chest, but looking like Christmas had come early.

Snape turned back towards Harry and Gabby, and reached for Gabby's hand to take her with him. "Come with me, Miss Delacour. We must inform the Headmaster, and the proper authorities. If you are lucky, the Committee for the Control and Regulation of Magical

Creatures will have you killed quickly, although I highly doubt it. Lucius Malfoy will want vengeance for a part human, such as yourself, attacking his son and heir."

Gabby remained where she was, looking defiant, and Harry grabbed hold of Snape's hand, just as it was about to land on Gabby's arm. Snape gave Harry a deep look of utmost loathing. "Mr. Potter, release my hand, immediately," Snape said coldly.

"Then leave her be, Professor," Harry replied with a hiss, returning Snape's glare with one filled with even more hate, if that were possible. "If you attempt to take Gabrielle, then I will defend her, Severus, and you are no match for me. Also, if Draco Malfoy even thinks to press charges on her, in a futile attempt to reduce a beautiful girl to a sub-human creature, then I will declare a blood feud between myself and the Malfoys, on the basis that Draco is a pathetic little creature, of near heffer intelligence, and I will destroy him the second he tries it."

"You are just like your father, arrogant and foolishly stupid, Potter," Snape spit out. "It is the law, you can do nothing about it. Keep up the rate you are going, and people will start thinking that you are going dark. Let her go."

Harry held Gabby even closer to comfort her, and to try to calm her down, for all the good it did. Gabby looked as if she would turn Snape and Malfoy both to ashes by staring at them if she could. "Law or not, Professor, I will not allow you or Malfoy to do it. I protect my own, and she had every reason to defend herself against Malfoy. Do you honestly think I am going dark? I don't deny that I will torture, destroy, and kill to protect the one's I care for, but who wouldn't? The law is prejudiced, and if I must be seen as dark, because I refuse to allow Gabrielle, or anyone for that matter, to be treated that way just because of their parentage, then so be it. That law will change eventually." Harry bent his wrist and his wand shot into place.

There were gasps all around them, and many students backed away carefully, not taking their eyes off of Harry's or Snape's wand, which Snape had just flashed out from deep within his robes. "This is your last chance, Mr. Potter. Release Miss Delacour to me, or I will be forced to subdue you."

"Try it, Severus, and I promise that you will regret it," Harry hissed back dangerously.

Snape raised his wand, almost too fast to see. Harry doubted that he would have seen it if he didn't have such powerfully enhanced senses. "Stupefy!" The jet of red light flashed across, directly at Harry, who let it connect. But it did nothing as it rippled across the battle robes that Harry now wore, which were normally transfigured to appear as school robes.

"My turn," Harry said darkly as he began to take in the magic around him, feeling it tingle in response. Quickly unlocking all of his magic, and releasing it for use, Harry held his wand steady toward Snape, as he focused his magic, and it began to swell around him. The tips of the front of his hair, which were normally angled back, were pointed a bit higher than normal, and the rest of his hair was flying, spread out behind him, the tips of his hair, front and back glowing a blinding white, as the Harry slowly levitated a few inches off the ground, which was fast becoming a small crater beneath him. The magic around him seemed to cocoon him in a powerful wind that made his robes blow wildly, glowing with magic. The air around him was heavy, cackling with raw power, and blue-white lightning flashed all across his skin and robes. Daring to look Harry in the eyes, Snape recoiled in horror at the glowing, emerald green spheres that seemed to be alive with an inner fire, delving easily through all of his occlumency barriers, and directly into his soul. Harry could see every thought and memory as if it were his own, and Snape could see, and feel, the intense, undilluted fury that Harry had for him.

Snape was spellbound. He couldn't believe the power that the Potter boy had; enough to manifest a physical aura at will, and control it! Snape could sense that the magic was raw, wild, and unchanneled, but the Potter boy was able to control it. It was called wild magic for a reason. The ambient magic that was all around them was wild, untamable, and unpredictable and could have a wide range of effects on people, creatures, and places. Wild magic is the reason that many places of extreme ambient magic, such as Hogwarts, were sometimes thought to be alive, to have a will of their own. How could the Potter boy manage to control such a force?

"Enough!"

Snape and Harry both turned to look at Dumbledore and Sirius, who were pushing themselves past several students who were gaping in awe at Harry. Sirius looked extremely proud of Harry, but gave a look of utter hatred in Snape's direction.

"Severus, explain yourself. Why do you have your wand out on a student?" Returning Sirius' glare of hatred with one of his own, Snape quickly told Dumbledore everything that he had been told, and what had happened accordingly.

During Snape's brief explanation of what had happened, Sirius nodded his head silently at different intervals, and Dumbledore appeared to be increasingly worried, especially when Snape informed him that Harry was able to draw on the power at will, to have the physical manifestation of his aura, as Dumbledore and Sirius had seen it when they arrived on the scene.

When Snape finished the explanation, Sirius looked murderous. "Do you mean to tell me, Snivellus, that you were going to turn this poor girl in for defending herself?" he roared at Snape. "Here I thought that you could sink no lower. You are a coward, Snivellus."

Snape winced each time Sirius called him Snivellus, but his face grew, if it was possible, even paler when Sirius called him a coward. "It was out of my hands, Black. I would think that you of all people know the dangers of not going to the authorities when the situation calls for it."

What little color there was in Sirius' face was now gone, and he reached for his wand.

"That is enough, the both of you!" Dumbledore said calmly, but his tone made it clear that it would do no good to argue. "Get a hold of yourselves, these first years are behaving more maturely than you." Snape and Sirius both made to put their wands away, still glaring hatefully at each other.

"Now, Professor Snape," Dumbledore said quietly, "I do believe that Mr. Malfoy is in your House, so I shall let the punishment for assaulting Miss Delacour fall to you."

Malfoy had a vicious grin showing, sure that he would get off, but Snape wiped it away almost immediately when he spoke softly

before turning on his heel and stalking off. "Draco, you shall receive one night's worth detention, and I will write to your father. Maybe he can impress upon you that it is not wise to pick fights out in the open. I suggest you go straight to Madame Pomfrey so that she can have a look at you."

Harry sniggered, but Malfoy gave him a withering glare and headed out the door from the great hall.

"Now, Professor Black," Dumbledore said quietly, jolting Sirius out of his thoughts. "Do you not have something to say in this matter?"

"Huh? Oh, right you are, Dumbledore," Sirius replied quickly, attempting to hide how pleased he was with Harry. "Well, Harry. It seems like Snivellus, eh-," he broke off at a stern look from Dumbledore. "I mean, Professor Snivelly, happy Dumbledore? It's all the respect he deserves. Anyways, Harry, young Draco Malfoy got off far too easily, I think. So I believe that I will also give you one night of detention, to be served with Hagrid. I hear that he has been having some troubles lately in the forbidden forest. Gabrielle, since you assaulted Mr. Malfoy also, I fear that I must also give you a detention, also to be served with Hagrid. Now both of you, head back to your common room, and wait for me there. I have a few other things that I wish to speak to you about."

"Sirius, Professor Black, we still have potions after lunch," Gabby said, picking up her bag.

Sirius chuckled, "Call me Sirius, both of you. Professor Black seems so... formal. I think being called Professor every day would make my hair go grey faster than it already is, and I don't need that, thanks. Don't worry about your potions class. I am quite sure that Harry can teach you whatever you both happen to miss. If Professor Snivelly asks, tell him to bring his inquiry to me, and I will handle it." Sirius' grin got a bit broader as he looked at them, sighing deeply, as if he couldn't wait for Snape to go complaining to him about two of his students skipping class.

Harry and Gabby quickly made their way out of the great hall, but before Harry turned the corner, he could see Sirius arguing quietly with Dumbledore as they headed up to the staff table.

"I bet you loved that didn't you?"

Harry and Gabby looked over, where Ron was getting up from where he had been sitting on the stairs, flanked by Dean, Seamus, and Sally-Ann Perks.

"What do you mean, Ron?" Harry asked suspiciously.

"Don't act like you don't know, Potter. We all read the Daily Prophet this morning. It makes sense, first me, then Malfoy on the train, and now this? You're going dark, Potter! And you better stay away from my sister!" Ron shouted at them both.

"You're pathetic, Weasley," Gabby replied angrily. "When are you going to get it? Letting your jealousy get the best of you like that isn't going to do anything except hurt the ones around you, and then you."

"Just make sure that Potter stays away from my sister, and we won't have any problems, got it?" Ron answered, pulling his wand.

Gabby growled, and reached for her wand. "Are you threatening me, Weasley?"

"Both of you, put your wands away this instant!" Professor McGonagall was storming down the stairs, looking mad as hell.

"Professor, I-"

"Do not attempt," Professor McGonagall began, cutting Ron off and rounding on him. "to make excuses for your actions, Mr. Weasley. I saw the entire argument, and you were out of line, purposefully provoking Miss Delacour and Mr. Potter in order to bait them into attacking you. You have lost another fifteen points for Gryffindor and another night of detention. Now move along, all of you."

"B-But Professor-,"

"Go, Mr. Weasley, and be grateful that I intervened. Do you remember the wand check that you were each given as you walked into the great hall this morning?"

Ron nodded. "My older brothers, Fred and George, told me that it was customary to make sure our wands are in proper working order. They said Hogwarts does it our first morning here."

"Very good, Mr. Weasley," Professor McGonagall replied. "What few know, however, is that we also test the level of development of your magical core. The average is anywhere from 350 to 400, Mr. Weasley, and you scored a 415."

"That's good isn't it?" Ron asked.

"Indeed it is, Mr. Weasley," Professor McGonagall answered anxiously. "We have had very few people in the last couple of centuries score above 400. One was Dumbledore himself, and another was a student by the name of Tom Riddle. If I recall correctly, Dumbledore scored 725, while Riddle scored 740." She looked over at Harry and Gabby, who both having an idea of where this was going, nodded silently.

Ron was looking extremely pleased with himself, but Professor McGonagall cut his grin short with her next words.

"This year, however, was different. Every first year that was sorted into the Emrys house was well above average. Their scores ranged from 435 to 460, with Mr. Longbottom having the lowest score of 435. Mr. Potter and Miss Delacour, however, scored even higher. Miss Delacour scored 965, being the highest score we have ever had, until Mr. Potter's results came in. Mr. Potter's score was 1370, which is over triple the average amount of power one would normally have, and there were obvious signs of his magic being... well not bound, since no bindings were found, but his magic was suppressed a great deal."

"Professor," Harry began in a firm whisper that only Gabby and Professor McGonagall could hear. "I don't think your test is accurate. I mean, it's not possible. I can sense the power in Dumbledore, and I normally have only a seventh of my magic released to use during classes. I keep the rest suppressed using occlumency barriers, and I know that he wields more power than I do, except when I release about half of my own magic."

"That's ridiculous, Mr. Potter. But, as a wizard matures, his powers and magical core also mature with him, which could very well

explain what you are asking. Keep in mind that we only test each person once, on their first day, not when they leave. Each witch or wizard becomes steadily more powerful as they grow older, but their powers peak when they fully mature on a witch or wizard's seventeenth birthday. Furthermore, I am very doubtful that such a young child as yourself, would have the skill in Occlumency to erect such barriers. Far be it from me to understand how you even know of such a subject. Mind magic is a very obscure, and often unknown branch of magic," Professor McGonagall said quietly to him and Gabby without taking a breath.

"Now, we have been using this test for almost four hundred years, and even if you did manage to have that much of your magic locked away, it would make you a squib, incapable of doing your practical spellwork for classes," she finished quietly before raising her voice again.

"Mr. Weasley, my point is, that if either Miss Delacour or Mr. Potter had attacked you, and seriously attempted to hurt you, whether or not they know the spells, they have sufficient power to pull it off if they really lose their tempers and control of their powers. I expect you all to remember this, and do try to get along. The Slytherins cause enough trouble and conflicts as it is."

Dean and Seamus were gawking at Harry and Gabby, while Sally-Ann looked between them and Ron, evidently horrorstruck. "Of course, Professor," Ron managed to stutter out as he quickly disappeared down into the dungeons.

"Shouldn't you two be heading to class?" Professor McGonagall had refocused her attention on Harry and Gabby, who were still standing there, awestruck about what Professor McGonagall had just revealed to them.

"Actually, Professor, Sirius told us to go back to our common room until he finishes talking with Professor Dumbledore," Harry answered swiftly.

"Move along then," Professor McGonagall replied. "And do try to keep out of trouble. Your father had a knack for it, and I would hate to think that his son inherited his talent for mischief."

Harry grinned, while Gabby giggled.

"Oh no, quite the contrary, Minerva," Sirius interrupted as he strode up to them. "James would have been quite disappointed if Harry didn't have at least some of his pranking skill."

"And you would be disappointed too, no doubt," Professor McGonagall told Sirius, looking at him very disapprovingly.

"Of course I would," Sirius replied, chuckling. "Life is too short as it is, to not live it to the fullest. I would expect Harry to enjoy his time here at Hogwarts, and prank a few teachers and students while he's at it, but I do hope that he knows where to draw the line, just short of causing any real mayhem."

"With an attitude like that, Sirius," Professor McGonagall replied sternly. "We should be glad that you do not have any children of your own, although it might have made you a little bit more responsible. You are as brash as you ever were."

"Ahh, brash. I have at least enjoyed my life, save for the ten years I spent in Azkaban," Sirius answered. "There are, of course, times when one must be serious, but your school years are there for you to enjoy, study, and learn about yourself. Causing trouble is second nature to some of us, so why deny what comes natural?"

"And what would Lily have said about you teaching her son to be a prankster, hmm Sirius?" Professor McGonagall asked with a knowing smile.

Sirius' grin faltered momentarily, but he quickly regained his composure before answering. "Lily would have probably killed James and me both for it. We both know how she hated James when he still had that big head of his. Pretty conceited we both were, when we were young, but we grew out of it."

"Then try at least, to honor her memory, and teach her son to grow up to be a man that she would be proud of, not some conceited prankster," Professor McGonagall replied harshly.

Harry's face darkened. "Professor," Harry began coolly, "my mother would be proud of me no matter what."

"Of course she would, dear," Professor McGonagall said soothingly. "But she would not want you pranking students and teachers, causing trouble, when you should be studying."

"She would want me to be myself, no matter what that meant, Professor," Harry snapped. "Whether or not she agreed with my choices, my mother would stand behind me and support me, as long as I was doing what I thought was right."

Professor McGonagall was speechless, and Sirius laughed. "Well said, Harry! I never heard even James defend his trouble making that well."

Professor McGonagall didn't find it at all amusing, as she stared between them both with disapproving looks of disdain. "Very well, do at least try to keep it to a minimum. We do not need anyone trying to outdo Peeves or the Weasley twins. Imagine the mayhem that would cause."

Professor McGonagall walked away, with a very gruesome look on her face, probably from envisioning the chaos which would ensue from an all out pranking war.

"Alright you two?" Sirius asked Harry and Gabby.

"We're good, Sirius," Gabby answered for them both.

"Say, what were you arguing with Dumbledore about, anyways?" Harry asked.

"That? Nothing much," Sirius replied quickly, looking uncomfortable. "All in good time, but first, I want to talk to you, Harry."

"About what?" Harry asked curiously. He couldn't think of very many things that would be important enough for Dumbledore to allow Sirius to keep them from their class, but Dumbledore had done nothing to stop Sirius when he told them to go back to their common room.

"Not here, Harry," Sirius said offhandedly. Harry thought Sirius looked a little disturbed. "Come on you two, let's go back to the common room and we can discuss it there, away from prying eyes and ears."

Harry and Gabby gave each other a look, but said nothing as they followed Sirius back to the Emrys common room, where they sat beside each other on the couch, while Sirius sat, sighing, in the chair he had been seated in the night before.

Sirius leaned forward in the chair, and gave Harry a wierd, longing look. "Harry, first off, I want to thank you for what you did for me, catching Peter. I meant to thank you last night, but I really didn't have the chance to."

Harry grinned, remembering the night before. "Yeah, I wanted to talk to you, too, Sirius. Sorry, though, I was a bit preoccupied."

Sirius chuckled softly and brushed his hair out of his eyes before he leaned back once more. "Not at all. James would have been very proud of you. Never let anyone tell you otherwise. But can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Harry answered quickly.

Sirius' face grew serious, and he gave Harry a grim look. Suddenly, Harry wasn't so sure that he wanted to answer whatever question he was about to be asked, especially if it bothered Sirius so much. "What gave you the idea to use the Avada Kedavra on Peter? And in front of a crowd of witnesses? I know Fudge let you off, but there are still those that would use that to paint you as going dark, just look at the Daily Prophet this morning. It called you a Dark Lord in training."

"What was I supposed to do? Let him get away?" Harry asked angrily. "Or how about let him be shipped to Azkaban, where it would have took him a good day or so to escape? I did what I had to do, Sirius. I'm not going to defend myself and what I did. He deserved it."

"We know that, Harry. But the general public doesn't," Sirius said slowly. "People are going to think that you are dark, Harry, and using an unforgiveable in full view of the public, and the Minister of Magic himself is all the weapon anyone needs to prove it."

"Let them think what they want, Sirius. I don't care," Harry replied curtly. "They are either blind followers, or they are hypocrits. People

just can't think for themselves anymore. It honestly doesn't matter to me what the public thinks of me. Gabby and I know the truth, as does anyone who matters to me."

"Don't you see, Harry?" Sirius cried exasperatedly. "The general public is going to read the Daily Prophet, and parents are going to be owling the Ministry and Dumbledore, trying to figure out why you haven't been expelled and hauled off to Azkaban, to prevent another Dark Lord. Besides, Harry, you don't understand the harm dark magic can do to you, just by using it. It's called dark magic for a reason. Look at my family. The Blacks were a notoriously dark family for centuries. I, myself, was heavily groomed in it. I also have a library full of books on dark magic at my parents, well my, home."

"It is called dark magic for several reasons, actually, Sirius," Harry said calmly. "Again, what the public thinks of me doesn't matter to me. I don't give a shit what they do, because if anyone tries to actually do anything to me, I will stop them dead in their tracks. And I know a lot more about dark magic than you think, Sirius. Dark magic consists of some truly gruesome magic, but it also contains several useful, very powerful spells, that were deemed dangerous because of their power and the power required to use them effectively and safely to begin with. They are labeled dark because of the fear people have of those capable of using them. Still, others, such as a wide range of combat spells, are viewed as dark because their sole purpose is cause destruction, pain, and suffering. The intent of a spell, and its effects, do not make it dark magic. What most people misunderstand, is that dark magic was first, and foremost classified, by the psychological effects that using it has on a witch or wizard, inherently damaging their mind and powers. Although there are several dark rituals that could enhance a wizard's powers, while undergoing dangerous transformations in the process, their powers and bodies would be strengthened, but their souls and minds would be damaged irreversibly. That is the true nature of dark magic, as it was once banned."

"Harry, you used the Killing Curse," Sirius said quietly. "That curse works by employing some of the darkest magic there is. All the unforgiveables do."

"You're right on that," Harry replied calmly. "To use an Unforgiveable, you have to want it, to mean it, just as you would to work any other dark magic. That is where the dark magic has a psychological effect

on those who use it, because of the intent one must have when using it, but there is a fine line between using and abusing dark magic. The caster must intend to, want to cause pain, death, or anguish, for the dark magic to work to its full extent. If however, the intent, such as to kill is there, but backed by a righteous anger and hatred, then the magic will work, but the psychological side effects of using such a curse will be inactive, because the intent behind using the curse was not evil. Otherwise, even every auror that used the AK or other unforgiveables with authorization would end up going mad from using the dark magic. If however, the intent behind using such a curse was evil, such as using the Cruciatus to enjoy torturing someone for the hell of it, you would begin to go mad, because of the damaging effects of using such dark magic. My sole intent at the platform was to execute the man responsible for my parents' deaths."

"I understand where you are coming from, Harry. Believe me, I do. Still, do you honestly think it was wise for you to do what you did?"

Harry looked incredulous. "Wise? Of course not, Sirius," Harry remarked snidely. "But Wormtail deserved it, and you know it. He was a special case. I know full well what the repercussions of my actions could be, but he betrayed my parents, so I made my choice."

"And what will you do in the future, Harry," Sirius asked, leaning back casually in the chair, twirling his wand in his fingers. "What will you do if, say, you see a death eater in public, but not wearing his mask and robes? Will you kill him?"

"Depending on the situation, I will do what has to be done," Harry answered coolly.

"What's that supposed to mean, Harry?" Sirius cried, leaping to his feet. "I'm trying to help you here!"

"I know that," Harry said. "But I will do what has to be done. I will occasionally have to bend, or break rules, and possibly more than a few laws, stepping on some influential toes here and there, but everything I do will be to protect myself and those I care about."

"It would be smarter to work behind the scenes, Harry," Sirius said calmly, sitting back down. "Don't show everyone, especially the public what you are doing. Wait for the wheel to roll, so to speak."

"That attitude, is exactly why we are in this mess to begin with," Harry replied. "The political wheel rolls too slowly, which is why nothing ever gets done. They care more about public opinion, than doing things the right way, and not dragging their feet. Did it ever occur to you that I want the public to notice what I do? I don't want the fame, but I can and will use it to my advantage. I want people to notice what I do and why. I want them to notice the changes I make, or try to make. Not everyone will agree, of course. But those who can think for themselves, and realize what I am trying to do; they are the one's I want to notice. Those people that will not stand idly by, and allow our corrupted government and its officials pass certain laws, and throw away others, that would certainly benefit the wizarding community as a whole."

"But what does that have anything to do with you using the killing curse on Peter?"

"It will show them that I will do whatever it takes to get things done," Harry replied exasperatedly. "I do plan on acting out most of my plans in secret, and behind the scenes, but a small part of one of them will require the public, or at least some of it, to see what I am doing. Moreover, it will show people that I will not mess around, and that I will not sit quietly on the side, while there are monsters out there torturing and killing people. People can barely trust the Ministry anymore, to do the right thing, regardless of public opinion, or the opinion of who is currently lining their pockets with galleons. I want people to know that I will not tolerate it, and that I will root it out, no matter what the cost. People like Wormtail deserve what they get. I'm not going to put it off, downplay it, or sugarcoat it. I personally don't believe in prison for murderers and people who torture others. For me, they either get the Kiss, or they can accept the tip of my wand being the last thing they ever see."

"It's not that I don't agree with you, Harry," Sirius breathed out. "But, your last statement alone would be enough for most people to think you are going dark."

"Then they are naive fools, who understand nothing, but accept what they are told as the truth, no matter what the source," Harry said. "How many of them have had to fight for their lives? Or the lives of their families? Not many, I'd bet. They are content to sit in their homes, letting others do the fighting, or pretending that nothing

is happening in the outside world at all, as long as it doesn't affect them. What they don't realize, is that sooner or later, for better or worse, it's going to affect them, whether they like it or not. Death eaters and people like them aren't going to be using incapacitating spells like stunners to slow me or those with me down. They are going to be aiming to torture and kill. They will be playing for keeps, and so will I. I won't be able to afford to play nice, and merely stun them or bind them. After all, I could go around all day doing that, but I would have to keep rehexing them because their buddies would keep reviving them or freeing them, until one of them finally gets me. No, it is better that I put them down once, for good, and make damn sure they don't get up again. Else, it could end up being my neck, or the neck of someone who happens to be with me. I won't accept that. I have to fight fire with fire."

"That's what Dumbledore is worried about, Harry," Sirius muttered under his breath so low that Harry could barely hear him. "Dumbledore thinks that you should worry more about your schoolwork, and enjoying your childhood, instead of concentrating on all those problems. You'll have plenty of time for that."

"Dumbledore still thinks that, after our discussion?" Harry asked incredulously. Harry hadn't thought that it would be so easy to convince Dumbledore in the first place to treat him as an equal, and unfortunately, his instincts were right.

"We all do, Harry," Sirius replied softly. "But that doesn't mean that we won't stand behind you and support your decisions."

"Right," Harry said disbelievingly. "I know that you and Remus would, but Dumbledore? How many people does he have spying on me right now, you think?"

"Just me," Sirius mumbled, getting up and looking out, down from the window, watching a few third year students down at the lake, playing with the giant squid."Or so he thought. Dumbledore wants me to report to him weekly on your progress here at Hogwarts, and on your plans. I don't think that he trusts you completely."

"And do you trust him, Sirius?" Harry shot at him. "The reason that Dumbledore doesn't trust me, is because he couldn't break into my mind and find anything that he was looking for there. He couldn't find

any evidence in my mind to prove to him either way of my intentions."

Sirius leapt to his feet. "I don't trust Dumbledore as far as I could blast him," Sirius shot back. "Why would I? I spent a decade in prison because he wouldn't prove my innocence. In fact, he did the exact opposite until yesterday! I expect that Dumbledore thought that if he made me your teacher, I would get close to you and feed him information, but he was wrong, Harry. The only reason I came here, allowing myself to be near a man that I detest so highly, was you. I wanted to see you, be close to you, form a bond with you like I should have years ago as your Godfather. I knew that it was very unlikely to be easy for me to find employment anywhere else so I took Dumbledore up on his offer, seeing my chance to get to know you and be there for you like I should have done years ago. James and Lily must hate me for it, wherever they are."

"They don't hate you, Sirius," Harry murmured, with a dark look. "They were disappointed. My mother said it was foolish, but they both agree that it was exactly what they would have expected you, or my father to do, if either of you were in that situation. They forgave you years ago. They know how much you care about me and wish that you could have changed that day."

Sirius paused, gazing curiously at Harry and Gabby. "What about you, Harry? Dumbledore told me about you telling him everything, your past, training, your plans, and even about the Horcruxes."

Harry frowned. "I told Dumbledore nothing more, and nothing less, than what I had to tell him in order to coerce him into working with me. I gave him only enough information to work with, to further the part of my plans that he is an instrument in, and only enough that he needed to know, so that he would not go off and do something stupid, which would inevitably fall back on me in a way that I don't want. I only gave him small bits of information on anything I told him, except for the Horcruxes."

"Which is why, I believe, Dumbledore has just come to you, asking you to find out all about the details, right Harry?" Gabby interrupted, smiling at Harry and clutching his hand. Harry squeezed her hand and nodded. Gabby turned her focus back onto Sirius and continued. "Harry was a bit too vague on his explanations, and no one would

expect Dumbledore to miss all the holes that Harry left when he was telling Dumbledore about his plans."

"Only I told Dumbledore exactly where he could stick it," Sirius interjected, grinning broadly. "I may agree with Dumbledore's views on what he thinks Harry should be focusing on, but Harry has been through this once before already and I will stand behind Harry, supporting him no matter what. I won't betray Harry's trust by being Dumbledore's little spy, just because he isn't happy with all the information he has been given. Personally, I think it's high time somebody got the nerve to give Dumbledore a piece of his own game. Noone likes to feel used, the way Dumbledore has done to us all these years, and it's about damn time someone uses him. He doesn't like it, oh well, neither did we."

Sirius looked down at his watch, and jumped. "Dancing hypogriffs! We've been in here a bit longer than I thought. Your classmates should have gotten out of class nearly ten minutes ago."

"We did," Hermione said, coming through the door behind them. "Hello Harry, Gabrielle. What are you doing here, Professor Black?"

"Hermione, please. Just call me Sirius," Sirius replied, chuckling. He got up to leave and stopped at the door, turning to look at Hermione as he answered her question. "Being called Professor makes me feel old. I just dropped by to have a chat with Harry and Gabrielle."

"Oh, that explains why they weren't in class," Hermione said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "Well, good day, Sirius."

"Good day to you also, Hermione," Sirius laughed as he walked out of the common room.

"So what's up, Hermione," Gabby asked, leaning back against Harry and stretching her legs out. Gabby watched Hermione curiously, not sure of the other girl. Hermione seemed highly intelligent, and from what Harry had told her, she was also very headstrong in her beliefs. Hermione wasn't necessarily confident around other people, and she sought acceptance for who she was, no matter who it was from. The girl had never had that many friends, and she would do nearly anything to have even a few, even if it meant going against her own beliefs, which is what Harry feared that she was doing. According to Harry, once Hermione was comfortable, and knew that she had

friends who cared about the real her, she would be herself more, confident in her actions, especially her schoolwork, helpful, but also a bit overbearing when it came to pressing her beliefs on others.

"Oh, not much really," Hermione replied as she sat at the desk near the wall and started pulling out parchment, a quill, ink, and her potions textbook. I enjoyed my first day here, but I don't see how Professor Snape could assign us a foot long essay on the first day. I mean, I won't have any trouble with it since I memorized all my course books by heart, but how can he expect everyone to know the basic theory describing how to establish what an unknown poison is, its ingredients, what the correct antidote would be, and which ingredients to use to brew it? Professor Snape's upper year classes must be really advanced by now, if he expects this much already."

"That's actually quite a simple process," Harry interrupted. "The trick is at the beginning, where you can use a variety of different spells to identify the ingredients and their quantitative ratios in whatever poison you are working with. Normally, most poisons you will deal with can be found in books, so a simple crosscheck, matching your results to various poisons, would tell you what you are dealing with, and what antidote to use. The book would usually give you a reference page or book, telling you where you can find the instructions to brew the antidote. That should be all that Professor Snape can expect from anyone for now, since identifying an unknown poison, and being able to decipher its ingredients, as well as knowing what ingredients and exact ratios to use to counteract the poison, would require a knowledge of herbology and potions combined that no first year would know, especially not on their first day. It would require a lot of cross-checking and a knowledge thorough enough to understand how to counter the effects of each ingredient in the poison effectively, without overdoing it and creating another poison. But, in the end, it really is as simple as breaking the poison down, and eliminating the effects of the ingredients of the poison, one by one until you have your antidote."

Hermione fixed Harry with a calculating look. "You seem to know a lot more than one would expect, Harry."

"Ah, it comes with the territory," Harry replied, leaning back easily with a broad grin. "Anyways, where is everyone else? Shouldn't they have come back after class?"

"I didn't figure they would, Harry," Gabby interrupted. "Didn't you look outside earlier? It's a beautiful day out, and tonight is going to be perfect. Nobody in their right mind would rather be inside on a day like this. I've been waiting for hours to drag you out."

Harry smiled and watched Daphne slip quietly into common room, giving her head a jerk to get his attention, and headed for an empty chair with her bag and homework. He had noticed the good weather, but he still had his mind on other things. A lot had developed that he hadn't been prepared for, and he still hadn't had the chance to talk to many of the girls privately or spend time with them. He had only the vaguest idea of what most of the girls thought about the situation that they had found themselves in, along with Harry, and what each of their feelings and reasons were. Daphne was going to be an issue, Harry already knew that off the bat. Her upper-class upbringing and the views that her family were infamous for, would make it difficult for her to accept being bound to a marriage contract, especially considering her independent, rebellious nature that she had been known for before Harry came back. That wasn't considering that the Greengrasses had been a neutral family, preferring not to take sides between the dark and the light for centuries, and marrying Harry would certainly change their standing drastically.

"Then what are we waiting for? Go on ahead if you want, and I'll meet up with you, unless you'd rather wait here. I hope you don't mind. I've been meaning to speak with Daphne since I haven't had much chance to do that yet, " Harry said.

Gabby gave Harry a piercing look. She knew what was on his mind, and who could blame him? Harry had a lot to deal with, and she knew that eventually he and Daphne would have to start talking, and figure out what they intended to do. Gabby agreed with Sirius that Harry shouldn't have to worry about such things as marriages, and fighting Voldemort, and she told him so. But Harry refused to put anything important off. He wanted to face his life head on, dealing with his fate on his own terms, and Gabby admired him greatly for it. Many grown wizards would cower, tremble, and flee from their own lives if they had to face even half of what Harry was destined to.

Destiny. One night while they were in their room at the Leaky Cauldron, Harry and Gabby had talked about that very subject. After all, who liked the feeling that they weren't in control of their lives? Anyone who denied that destiny exists did it for that sole reason,

mistakenly believing that having a destiny took away one's free will. Gabby had believed it too, until then.

Harry had looked at her softly and told her, "We are all born with a destiny. Nobody can choose their destiny, but each person chooses their path they follow to reach it. That is free will. A person is not formed by fate, but by the environment around them. They are created by the opinions, beliefs, and actions of others, which they can choose to or not to follow. A man is born as many men, but each dies as only one. It is the choices that each one of us makes, that decides who we are. While our past experiences, decisions, and choices, make us who we are, destiny gives us a destination for our lives. Destiny is there for the hope of achieving our greatest fulfillment and potential in our lives, making something great of it."

"Free will. That was the difference between knowing your destiny, and walking it. It was the difference in being resigned to your fate, and walking into it with your head held high. It was magic at its deepest. Love. In the end, that was all that truly mattered, for it was a power far beyond Voldemort's, beyond the reach of any magic, able to transcend death itself." That, Harry had said, was Voldemort's greatest weakness, for "you do not pity the dead, but the living, and those who know not love. Voldemort fears death, and has done everything in his power to overcome it, but the true master of death does not seek to run away from it, as Voldemort has done. Rather, he accepts that in the end, we all must die, and understands that there are far worse things in the world than dying."

Gabby knew that Harry knew what his destiny was, many people probably did, or had a good guess. But he was determined to reach it in his own way. How Harry understood the words he had spoken to her that night was beyond her. Rolling his words over in her mind, their meaning seemed so simple and clear, but at the same time, there were deep, hidden things in those words that she couldn't comprehend.

"Sure, I'll go on ahead and give you two some privacy," Gabby answered. "Do you want to come, Hermione?"

Hermione perked up from where she had begun to work and looked over. "Why not? I should have time to finish this later." Packing up her things, Hermione followed Gabrielle out the door to the common room.

Harry walked over, and leaned up against the wall, next to Daphne, and waited for her to begin. She must have had something on her mind to want him to come over to her in private.

Daphne sighed quietly to herself as she watched Gabrielle and Hermione head out to enjoy the day outside, and her stomach turned sour when Harry came over to her. She knew that she had caught his attention a couple minutes beforehand, but now everything that she had thought about, and wanted to tell him, slipped away.

All of her life, Daphne had valued her independence, even more so than her extremely spoiled little sister. Because of her attitude towards other people, and her habit of sticking to herself, many people misunderstood her, believing her to be a spoiled princess who always got her way. When in fact, the truth was quite the opposite. Her sister, Astoria, was the princess of the two. Her parents had always loved them both, of course, but Astoria had always been the favorite. Daphne didn't blame her for it, nor did she envy her sister. Daphne knew her parents loved her, but she preferred to stay silent, hidden in the shadows, unnoticed. It was easier to observe people that way. It wasn't that she didn't like people, but Daphne hated that people were often so predictable. Even her best friend Tracey Davis, who was always so totally random, and one of the few who could make her laugh, tended to be a bit predictable when it came to gossip. Daphne found it immature, so she preferred to avoid most people, simply because they annoyed her.

Harry Potter. That name. That boy. Try as she might, Daphne could not blame him for the situation she now found herself in, along with him. Nor could she blame his views, and actions towards trying to get to know the girls that he would one day have to marry. Daphne knew boys well enough to know that it would be a dream come true for most boys, but it seemed to sincerely bother Harry, who seemed very content to just have Gabrielle. But why? What made Harry Potter so different, so unpredictable? Most boys would be boasting to everyone about all the girls they had, if they were in Harry's shoes, but he had told no one outside the small circle of people he trusted, and the girls themselves. Instead of just being happy about it, and cheering that he had so many girls, Harry seemed to be in the same

spot as the girls, trying to make the best of it, just figuring out what to do, getting to know each of the girls, one day and step at a time.

It was this, and the overwhelming power that Daphne could feel restrained within him, that intrigued her so much, that it so nearly eliminated her fury at her father, when he sent a letter back to her, explaining what he had done to his baby girl ten years previous.

What was worse, Aiden Greengrass had involved Astoria also, but unknowingly. At the time, he did not believe that he would have another daughter, but he did. That was the day he chose Astoria's name, even before she was conceived. Ever since, her father had been dreading the day, if it ever came, that his daughters would have to marry the Lord Black, whom most believed would end up being Draco Malfoy, at least until the will reading of Lord Sirius Black not two weeks before term began.

Daphne had to admit, she would have murdered Draco Malfoy, or herself, before she ever married such a prat. At least Harry seemed somewhat decent, and good looking. Daphne couldn't deny it to herself, she did find Harry Potter fascinating, and she liked him, which was a rarity for her. But she would still be cautious. After all, a marriage to Harry Potter would have an extreme effect on her family, as well as her, especially politically.

Her family had been dark, but remained neutral for generations, carefully protecting themselves from the wars between the various dark lords and leaders of the light, but if Daphne and her sister married Harry, that balance would be shifted heavily, presumably towards the light. The careful alliances and treaties her family had made with the other dark families would be broken, and her family would be in danger if another war arose.

There was a lot to contemplate, especially considering how Daphne abhorred the idea of being forced to marry someone she didn't want to, and even if she did, she despised the fact that her choice was taken away from her. Daphne hated her father for it, even as she loved him, but as hard as she try, she could place none of the blame on Harry Potter. Was he not in the same predicament as she, but worse? Besides, Daphne told herself, there was a slim chance that she was already beginning to like the idea of marrying him.

Daphne looked up from her parchment, and let her quill fall from her fingers. Harry was leaning against the wall beside the chair that she herself now sat in. "I owled my father late last night, after everyone else had either passed out or gone to bed. I got his reply owl shortly before potions ended," Daphne finally said after a few moments of silence between them.

Daphne half expected Harry to say something, but instead, he stayed silent, giving her a thoughtful look, making sure that Daphne knew she had his full attention.

When Harry remained silent, Daphne continued. "My father admitted to me about the contract he signed with your Godfather, Sirius Black, shortly before he was sent to Azkaban. He said it changed a preexisting will slightly since my sister and I hadn't yet been born when it was first signed with Lord Arcturus Black. I also read it over several times myself, looking for any loopholes that might get me out of this mess." Daphne paused.

"And?" Harry asked, suddenly sounding hopeful.

Daphne glared up at him. "You really are that desperate to get rid of me aren't you? Do you find me that horribly unattractive?" Daphne was surprised at her own anger, after all, shouldn't she be happy if she had found a way out of it?

Harry gulped. "Not at all. You're gorgeous, and intelligent. But I don't like this any more than you do. Do you think I want someone telling me who I can love, or have to marry? I choose my own life, not anyone else."

The cold glint in Daphne's eyes grew soft, and she bowed her head. "I feel the same way, believe me. Unfortunately, the contract is airtight. I've tried hating you for it, but I can't. That doesn't mean that I am going to... how you say it... accept my fate?"

Harry nodded. "I didn't expect you to."

Daphne's head snapped up, frowning. "Then what did you expect?" she asked him sharply, giving him a questioning look.

Harry crossed his arms and replied quietly. "Honestly, I didn't expect anything from you. My only intention was to make you aware of it, so

that you could decide for yourself how to handle it, and maybe we could go from there."

Daphne looked incredulous. "What do you mean go from there?" she cried out angrily. "Do you expect me to just give in the way you have, and just open up to you? It doesn't work that way. My life is my own, and nobody, not you, or even my father, can take that from me!"

Harry wanted to try to calm her down, but her temper made her a bit unreasonable. "Of course that's not the way it works," Harry snapped. "And I'm not trying to take anything from you. You may not believe me when I say it, but I don't want to be in this any more than you do."

Daphne leaned back in her chair with her arms crossed, glaring at Harry accusatorily. "You don't seem so upset about it. I've watched you with the rest of the girls. You seem to be very content with it."

Harry sighed. What was Daphne thinking? It was like she was trying to find any and every reason to blame Harry for doing something wrong, even though Harry could tell that Daphne only half believed her words herself. "Come on, Daphne. I know you're more observant than that. Don't you realize that I am trying to make the best of what I have? Besides, what's so wrong with forming friendships and relationships with the girls that I will most likely have to marry one day? I'd rather not be forced to marry and live with complete strangers, you know."

Daphne's eyes flashed in anger. "So it's all for show?" she snapped coldly, pointing her finger at Harry. "You haven't been enjoying yourself? Your smiles and charm when you're around the girls are all fake?" Daphne laughed cruelly. "Oh, that's nice to know," she said sarcastically. "How could anyone trust a bloke who shows the exact opposite of what he's really feeling, and lets you make your own false assumptions, thinking that he enjoys being around you."

It was lucky that Harry had his own emotions, especially his anger, locked away behind his occlumency barriers. He was able to be far more patient with Daphne than he normally would have been with anyone, considering what she had just said to him. Harry stared her in the eyes and spoke firmly, carefully choosing each word. "I didn't say any of that, Daphne, and I never will. I admit that I enjoyed last

night, and the small amount of time that I have been able to spend getting to know the other girls better."

Daphne reared back, looking indignant. "The other girls?" she replied coolly, with a furious glare at Harry. "Thanks, I mean it."

Harry looked at her softly, willing her to understand. Why was she taking everything he said the wrong way? Was she that desperate to hate him, instead of her father for what had been done? "Don't give me that, Daphne. You know full well what I meant. You haven't given me the chance to sit down and spend time with you, at least not before now, and I thought it best to give you time and space, allowing you to think things over and make the first move yourself. Why are you so upset because you think I don't like being around you? I thought you hate me, or you're trying hard to?"

Daphne bowed her head, suddenly looking ashamed of herself. She solemnly wished that Harry would be an arrogant prick with her, but unfortunately for her, his every reply was perfect dammit. No bloke could possibly be that sweet, or sensitive to another's feelings. "No, I don't hate you, Harry. Actually, I like you, which is the last thing I expected. It's just... it's a lot to take in, and I needed time to myself."

Daphne gazed sadly out the window that was next to her, talking to herself more than anything. "I mean, what was I supposed to do?" she asked Harry, still looking out into the daylight. "You had just told me, and given me proof, that my life wasn't my own anymore. You showed me that my father signed not only me away, but even my sister. Why did he have to drag Astoria into it? I can't believe he did that; she was always his favorite. He signed us away to some unknown bloke, mostly thought to be Draco Malfoy before you came along. How could he do that to us? What was so important to him, that he gave away both of his daughters, and signed away our right to choose who we wanted?" Daphne's voice continually rose in volume as she spoke, as her temper against her father began to once again rage and burn from the still smoldering ashes that had been left after she read his letter earlier that day.

Harry was silent for a minute, looking at Daphne as if he barely realized the pain and betrayal that many of the girls must be feeling. The question was, why hadn't he seen it before? Was he that thoughtless, just like most blokes were when they were young? Harry sighed to himself. He still had a lot to learn. "I don't know what

you were supposed to do," Harry said finally, causing Daphne to look back over at him with pleading eyes. "The choice was, and still is, your choice. It always will be. I only gave you the information you needed to hear, it's your decision what to do with it."

They were both silent for a moment, staring into each other's eyes. Harry's full of concern, and Daphne's full of pain, now totally devoid of the anger that had sparked so quickly not minutes before.

"I wish that I could answer your other questions for you, but I can't," Harry stated quietly, not taking his eyes off of Daphne's. "I can't tell you what your father was thinking, or feeling, when he signed that contract. Did you ask him?"

Daphne didn't move, but slowly nodded her head, her eyes beginning to water. "I did, but he completely avoided the question, and that's not like him. He always tells us, Astoria and me, what we need to know."

"What about Sirius?" Harry replied. "Have you asked him if he knows why your father made the contract with him in the first place?"

Daphne's eyes went wide, shocked. "N-No," she stuttered out. "I don't know why I didn't think to. Do you think Professor Black will tell me?"

"Tell you what?" The voice came from the common room door, and they both turned to see Sirius walking up to them. "And please, call me Sirius. I must have asked half the school to by now."

Harry grinned. "What brought you back this way, eh Sirius?"

"You did. I was strolling along one of the outside corridors, and I spotted Gabrielle, but you were nowhere around. I found it quite odd, to be sure. So I came looking for you," Sirius answered matter-of-factly.

Sirius fixed Daphne with a look. "Daphne, isn't it? Daphne Greengrass?"

Daphne nodded silently.

"So, what is it that you wanted to ask me? Please, ask me anything. Your father was a good friend of mine."

"I know," Daphne mumbled. Her voice was barely audible. "My father is the one I want to ask you about. I asked him, but he avoided my question entirely."

Sirius looked concerned. "What is the question?"

"Do you know why my father signed my sister and me both away? Didn't he care about us enough to consider our feelings about having no choice who we marry?" Daphne was in tears, quite unlike many would expect of the infamous Ice Queen of Slytherin. She huddled over in her chair, and kept her arms close, wrapped around her own chest.

"I can't say that I haven't been expecting you to ask me something to that effect," Sirius said thoughtfully. "But I did think that Aiden would have liked to tell you himself."

Daphne looked up disbelievingly, her eyes still wet and red around the brims. "So you know?"

"Of course I do," Sirius answered firmly. "I wouldn't have signed it otherwise, especially knowing that I was signing away part of Harry's future, and he means everything to me then and now. I see him as my own son, and a part of the best friends I ever had. I love Harry, but I also do it because I would like to honor their memory by raising their son as my own, the way they would have wanted." He looked directly at Harry with his last sentence, and Harry felt, once more, the connection to his Godfather that he had before he came back.

"Then why?"

"Your father wanted to make a statement, loud and clear," Sirius replied. "As you probably know, your family has remained neutral for ages, but your father has sought to change that, which would be very dangerous for him, and you. Keep in mind that your sister was not yet born when the contract was signed. The contract names you both, even though Astoria hadn't even been conceived yet, because your father said that if he had another daughter, he would take it as a sign that it was meant to be this way. He has never agreed with many of the other 'dark' families, and their support for You-Know-

Who, and he wanted to take a stand for his beliefs. Unfortunately, you were a baby then, and he didn't want to risk his family, so he did what he thought best. Your father contacted me, just before All-Hallows-Eve, the night Harry's parents, James and Lily Potter, died. He knew that even then, Harry was the person I cared most about in this world, and knew me well enough to realize that Harry was the only person that I would willingly name Lord Black. Your father knew exactly who he was engaging you to, and in his own words, he could think of no one better. Not only would your marriage place your family solidly in the Light, but you would also be well protected from the people who would know doubt go after your father, and your entire family, for him allowing the marriage to happen. He knew that his beliefs and actions would place your family in danger, and this was his solution. It was as easy a transition as he could think of, and even then, it broke his heart to do it, but he did it to protect you."

Daphne was speechless. On the one hand, she loved her father, and believed that he had her best interests at heart, especially considering how hard it had to have been on him. She knew that he was not the type of man to sit idly by, letting others fight for what he himself believed in. But on the other hand, the way he had done it made her feel like dirt. She wasn't just a political tool for her father to use, but in a way, that's exactly what he had used her as. Indeed, he was keeping her, and her sister both as safe as it was possible to be considering the choices, but it was also Astoria's and her marriage to Harry Potter that would enact her father's whole plan. Daphne knew that her father loved her, but she still felt used.

Silently, Daphne began to put up her things in her bag, before looking at Harry. "I'm sorry I blamed you, but please, I need some time to think this all over."

Harry gave her a nod, and Daphne quickly disappeared to her room.

Beside the Black Lake, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Leaving Harry alone with Daphne in the common room, Gabby and Hermione headed out towards the lake.

As they approached the lake, they saw a few first years watching Fred and George messing with the giant squid, cheered on by the first years, and Lee Jordan, who slipped something into his robes just before Gabby could see what it was. Checking quickly to see if

anyone had noticed, Lee slipped to the back of the crowd before disappearing.

Gabby and Hermione chose a spot under a nice, shady tree, a short distance away from where the first years were. Gabby leaned back, enjoying the feel of the wind as it blew softly across her. Hermione sat down beside her, but remained quiet. In all honesty, Gabby was surprised that Hermione had agreed to come down to the lake with her, instead of excusing herself to the library. That wasn't the only thing that had surprised her about Hermione recently, especially with what Harry had told her of the bushy headed girl, and by her own confessions the night before.

Hermione watched the lake silently, admiring how beautifully it seemed to shimmer on a bright sunny day such as this. After a moment, she turned to Gabby, but the other girl simply stared off into nowhere. "Gabrielle, what's wrong?"

Hearing her voice, Gabby snapped out of her thoughts. "Oh, it's nothing."

Hermione didn't buy it, but decided not to push. "Okay, but if you change your mind, I'll be here to listen if you need someone to talk to."

Gabby slowly let herself smile. Here she was, worried about Hermione, and Hermione was offering her the ear of a friend. "It's not like that Hermione. I was wondering about you, actually."

Hermione gave her a confused look. "What about me? All you have to do is ask. I don't know why, but I trust you, Gabrielle."

Now, Gabby was grinning softly, staring out over the lake, but said nothing in reply.

After a few minutes of silence, the lack of knowledge about what was currently piquing her curiosity seemed to have driven Hermione's patience straight off the edge. "Gabrielle, what is it? Don't I at least get the chance to tell you myself?"

"Tell me what?" Gabby asked quickly.

Hermione turned red, blushing. "Oh... well... whatever it is you're wondering about me."

By Hermione's reaction, she seemed to have a pretty good idea what was going through her mind. At least, that was what Gabby figured. "Looks like you already know what I'm talking about, Hermione," Gabby replied, not taking her eyes off the bushy headed girl.

Hermione blushed even redder, not daring to look up at Gabby. "I - I don't know what came over me last night. Not really..."

"You seemed to be enjoying yourself," Gabby said quietly.

"It was... unexpected," Hermione stated slowly. "I never thought I would do something like that. I mean, it's not like me at all, but I saw the rest of you doing it, so I guess I just let myself go. I wanted to have fun, and I did."

"Oh really? Is that all?" Gabby asked disbelievingly.

Hermione smirked. "Yeah, for now. We're too young for anything else, don't you think?"

Gabby was stunned. From everything that Harry had told her of Hermione, she was normally a reserved, bookish girl, unless it came to something she truly believed in. This was a side of Hermione's way of thinking that, perhaps fortunately, Harry had never been privy to. "What are you talking about, Hermione? Surely you can't already be thinking about that?"

Hermione's grin grew. "No, but one day. It's never too early to start thinking about and planning for the future. I want to enjoy my life, you know."

Gabby couldn't stand herself. She didn't know whether to be understanding, roll with laughter, or to be utterly shocked at the frankness of the girl. Gabby gave Hermione one thing. She definitely lived up to Harry's boasting about her always having the nerve to speak her mind, no matter how brutal. If they weren't careful, Gabby figured, they would one day have a miniature Tonks on their hands.

"Hermione, I'm a veela," Gabby started. "Veela are sexual creatures by nature. We are born knowing about sex. It is how most, well any full blooded veela, survive outside of our own sanctuary. Fortunately, since I am not full blooded, I can survive off of human food. But even still, I am very lucky to have been raised outside of the veela sanctuary, where my grandmother rules. I'm a virgin, but if I had been raised in the sanctuary, I probably would have had sex within my first few years of life, like almost all veela do. But even through all that, I'm still shocked by what you have just said."

"Th-That's not exactly w-what I meant," Hermione stuttered out, blushing madly.

Gabby raised her eyebrows, clearly not convinced.

"I j-just meant... that what everyone told me... about being myself was... you know... I guess what I mean to say is, I decided to just be myself and enjoy my life. Planning my future and what I want to do is important, but I have plenty of time for that. Until then, a girl has to have some fun doesn't she?"

"That's not what I expected to hear, you know that right?" Gabby asked.

Hermione smirked. "I doubt anyone would expect that from a shy bookworm like me. But since noone has ever took the time to know how outgoing and straightforward I can be, I'll never really know for sure. It's definitely not a side of me I'll show a bloke anytime soon."

"Mm hmm... and what about last night with Harry then?" Gabby replied knowingly, dodging the book that Hermione swung playfully at her head.

"Oi! Be careful there!" Fred called out, striding toward them.

"Yeah, we've seen what Harry can do to people who mess with Gabrielle," George said, appearing next to his twin.

"What would that be, hmm?" Hermione asked, perking her head to the side slyly.

"He can turn you any color he likes... say blue... and only he knows how to turn you back, so you stay that way as long as he likes," Fred replied.

"And he can make ferocious beasts appear and make them use you for, eh... lunch... and only he can get rid of them." George continued.

"Or how about," Harry's voice came from behind the twins, making their eyes go wide in horror. "I can turn you into Siamese twins, complete with whiskers, pointy ears, a pair of cute fluffy pink tails, and red fur all over. What do you think girls? I think they deserve it for trying to have some fun with you, don't ya think?"

Gabby and Hermione were wearing identical, evil grins.

The twins both gulped, and turned tail, running full pelt for the front doors, but Harry, making sure that nobody was paying any attention, flicked his wrist, and wandlessly summoned the twins back to him, tranfiguring them as they flew through the air.

Harry watched amused, as the twins flew back to him, and landed haphazardly in a heap at his feet.

"Come on, Harry. Why'd you have to go and do that," Fred said, trying to get up. "Argh... Merlin's beard, my bum hurts," Fred said, rubbing his bum and wincing. He failed to noticed the two fluffy tails that were now poking from underneath his robes.

"Oi! Rub your own bum, Fred. Mine hurts too!" George cried out.

Fred frowned. "I di-" he started, but cut off as he realized what Harry had done. Before he could turn to glare at Harry, he caught site of George, who had grown pointy ears and whiskers, had only one arm, and had bright red hair all over him.

"Ha, you should see yourself George!" Fred cried out, pointing with his one arm at his twin.

"Aye," George said knowingly. "You're a sight yourself Fred," he said, pulling the hair around his twin's neck.

"Ouch!" Fred yelled, and attempted to throw himself at his twin, which caused the both to fall over, hands grabbing at each other's necks.

Meanwhile, Harry was smirking at the twins, who were now, quite literally, joined at the hip. Gabby and Hermione were roaring with laughter, drawing the attention of quite a few other first years, along with a couple second years, and some fifth years, all of whom joined the girls in laughing and catcalling at the twins.

The twins, having noticed all the attention they were getting, promptly stop trying to strangle each other by the hair on each other's chins, and began making awkward bows to their audience, all the while, barely managing to stay standing.

"Alright, you two," Harry laughed. "I'm glad you're here, actually."

"Why?" Fred asked.

"Yes, what would a little pipsqueak like you want with us?" George continued.

"Especially after you did this to us!" the twins finished.

Harry leaned easily back against the tree the girls had sat under. He hadn't expected the twins to take it sitting down, and he had to say that he was going to immensely enjoy watching them squirm. "Hey, I could decide to leave you both like that for... a week, perhaps?"

The twins gaped at Harry in horror.

"Y-You wouldn't dare," Fred cried, but the look of terror on his face said that he believed every word Harry said.

"I think he would, dear brother. I suggest we hear him out," George said quietly.

Harry chuckled. "Don't worry. It's nothing really. I just wanted to show everyone something, but it's back in my room. I was going to come looking for you to see if you could possibly help me gather everyone up before dinner."

Hermione looked as confused as the twins, but looking Gabby's way, and seeing her slight nod of agreement, put her worries out of her mind.

"Is that it?" Fred asked, looking bewildered. Honestly, he had expected something a bit more, well, amusing really. At least amusing to Harry. Fred was thankful that hadn't come to pass as it would have been at his and George's, most likely humiliating, expense.

Harry nodded. He knew the twins hadn't expected to get off so easily, but then again, his fun with them hadn't been planned as this had. Still, they couldn't know that Harry himself had no way of countering his charm and that it would take exactly one full week to expire, yet. Part of Harry wished that Colin Creevey was already at Hogwarts to see it happen, because when the charm did wear off, the twins would be stark naked, wherever they were, and in full view of whoever happened to be watching.

"What is it that you want to show everybody, Harry?" George asked curiously.

"You'll find out with the rest," Harry replied. "Except for Gabby, of course. She probably already knows what I have in mind, so it won't be a surprise to her."

Gabby faked a sad look, but Harry smiled brilliantly at her. "Don't worry, Gabby. I have something special in mind for you, but that come's later tonight."

Gabby and Hermione squealed, both of them jumping up and down, looking very excited. How Hermione could be excited about it, Harry didn't know. Girls were wierd sometimes, very.

"Alright, Harry. We'll get right on it, but where and when do we meet you?"

Harry raised an eyebrow at Fred. "Let's say an hour from now, in the common room. Think you guys can do it?"

"You got it, mate," George said. "Just leave it to us."

"Cool, thanks you guys."

"No problem, Harry. See ya in a few," Fred replied as they walked away quickly, in search of their dorm mates.

Harry turned to Gabby and Hermione, who had settled down a bit, but were smiling brightly at him. "Well ladies, shall we?" he asked, offering them each an arm.

A minute later, Harry walked back up to the castle, with Gabby and Hermione on either side of him. The day was starting to look up finally, and the night would be oh so much better.

Author's Notes:

Mmm... sorry about the long update folks. I tend to be a bit busy lately. Life... you know... work before fun, can't do it any other way. Thanks for all your reviews, and I hope you continue to enjoy the story. Btw, for those who have asked me, I will only be posting an unedited, but lemon cut version of this story here on this site. Once I have completed it, I will post the full, reviewed, edited, and modified story on a site that allows NC-17, where I will post my complete, updated files where I have gone back and filled all the holes, and have not cut out all the lemon, thanks to my reviewers.

This is to those couple that I have found that have already posted my story on their own blogs or sites, or links to it. I'm glad you think my story is worth that much, but don't forget I'm playing in JKR's backyard. Anyways, thanks to you, I have probably gained a lot of readers, but don't think I haven't reviewed those couple of sites and read everything said, especially the negative. If anyone has a problem with this story, or any ideas on how it can be improved, feel free to bring it to my attention. I won't give any 'nasty' replies to reviews per se, but I will be just as honest about my opinion.

There will of course be scenes that are recognized from Harry's first year, but I will only include those that help to further the plot, and will most likely change them up a bit. This is only to contribute to the argument that I have already placed about not changing the future too much. However, as I said, I will change the details around to suit my own purposes and any such recognizable event is credited to JKR for her geniusity.

Furthermore, I will NOT remove Ginny from the coven. She happens to be my close 2nd favorite, sorry to all those who had hopes otherwise. In terms of arguments against her, if a sufficient number of my reviewers leave note in their reviews as to their objections and reasons, I will of course leave a note at the end of my next chapter answering ALL arguments to a well reasoned, logical point, backed by JKR's own writing, that I have already used to quell the objections of quite a few who have mailed me. As for ships... I have planned nearly all of them out so far, but since many of them have not yet been revealed in the story, I will neglect to post them here.

Ah, the power levels. Brief overview and a little math to answer some questions before they arise. Take note that as Harry said, Dumbledore's powers were equal to about half of his own. This is the half the key to the math, the other half being that as a wizard matures, his powers grow along with him until they peak at the age of 17.

Tom Marvolo Riddle (a.k.a. Lord Voldemort): 740 (11yrs, magical core Immature) ...4895 (Matured Powers)

Dumbledore: 725 (11yrs, magical core Immature) ...4795 (Matured powers)

Harry: 1370 (11yrs, magical core Immature, approx. 1/7 of his powers.) True score: 9590 (2x Dumbledore's) ...63427 (Matured Powers)

Gabrielle: 965 (11yrs, magical core Immature) ...6382 (Matured powers)

I have already given various information throughout the story, detailing what I am about to write, but I am going to outline it for those who have not managed to put the picture together yet. Remember that right now, Harry's and Gabby's powers are immature. Also, since I will no doubt have many comments about the godly power of Harry, I will also note that there are two reasons his powers are so high. One, of course, would be his ancestry. I have only begun to reveal a couple of Merlin's secrets of who he was, but being one of the 9 Divines (Immortals, gods, etc...) or whatever you choose to call them, Merlin passed on extreme amounts of power that would rightly be considered godly, far more than a normal mortal could handle. Reason two is that Harry has all

the powers of one of the ancient Sorceror's, though he is slowly growing into them. The one ability that shows itself immediately, as you can see, is the ability to draw external magic into himself. Every wizard is connected to magic to a varying degree, and can manipulate their own magic by channeling it through their magical core. Harry's connection to magic is far more powerful, not only being a Sorceror, but also the Heir of the one who initially brought magic to mortals, making it possible for witches and wizards to exist. While any wizard is able to manipulate the magic around them with the use of a wand, by drawing swirls and patterns in it, and using their will to create the spells, Harry is, as I said, able to draw it into himself, or he can manipulate it by will alone. The magic around Harry is, in essence, an extension of himself, all the while separate from him, but also a part of him, turning his magical core into a veritable ocean of magic, seemingly neverending. This makes it nigh impossible to get an accurate read on Harry's own magical core.

BTW for those of you who I know will feel compelled to mention that I went over the top with his powers, I did not. It is perfectly realistic for the end result, but to tell you that, I would have to reveal several secrets, which would ruin the story. Just have faith that I know what I am doing, and where I am going with this. That is also why I gave the information above on the two reasons he is so powerful.

Again, thank you to all who have reviewed, and I hope you continue to look forward to this story.

Chapter 9: The Ires of Lucius Malfoy

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Albus Dumbledore frowned, sitting behind his desk, twiddling his wand between his fingers. He had a massive headache, and all from trying to figure out how to undo his numerous mistakes when it came to his wayward charge, Harry Potter. Setting his wand again on top of his desk, he began to carefully massage his temples, for what had to be the eleventh time that afternoon.

As Albus stood up, and began pacing back and forth in his office, which he did quite a lot, but even moreso lately, he pondered his wand. Harry had told him how he knew of the Hallows, and of Albus' own wand, but lately, Albus couldn't help but to wonder if the Elder Wand was finally beginning to lose it's power.

When Dumbledore won the wand's allegiance from his old friend Gellert, he had felt a humming, a sense of sentience within the wand, as if it had a mind of it's own. The feeling was slightly familiar to that which Albus got when he was within Hogwarts, but this was different. Albus could often hear, and feel things from within the wand, especially during duels, and it had often saved his life. Unlike Hogwarts, Dumbledore could feel that the wand was not totally subservient to it's master, which confused him a great deal. It felt more like partner to him, a partner ready to accompany him on great and mysterious adventures.

Now though, the connection between wand and master seemed weaker than before. No longer did Dumbledore feel it pulsing, always eager to do his bidding. Now, it seemed resigned, much like that of a normal wand that was being forced to serve the wrong master. Dumbledore hadn't the faintest idea what to think of this bizarre behavior, but it unnerved him even more when in the presence of a certain emerald-eyed wizard.

Try as he might, Albus Dumbledore could not shake the feeling of wariness when near Harry Potter. The feeling was that of a sheep being stalked by a wolf, hidden deep in the shadows, unable to be seen, but hungry and always ready to strike. When he was near him, Albus could feel the tumultuous power, raging within Harry, but also so carefully controlled. Unknown to anyone else in the castle, Albus

has been outside Harry's transfiguration class, and felt the immense power that Harry put into his spells. True, this lack of control, and overpowering his spells was a clear sign of ineptitude, but the sheer force that Harry was able to continually put behind each spell was unnerving. Then, not hours ago, Albus had seen clear evidence of Harry's powers in the Great Hall, but also recieved a very disturbing report from his Potions Master, giving evidence that Harry was able to call forth his powers, and control them with a great deal more ease than Dumbledore could have guessed from watching his prior spellwork.

The feeling of unease would not go away. Dumbledore could not dismiss the similarities between Harry and Tom Riddle. Their childhoods were alike in many ways, and grudgingly, Albus had to admit that he saw Harry's personality budding into one far more like Tom's than his own. Harry was already resourceful, intelligent, very talented, and very powerful. And, Albus had to admit, while gritting his teeth, Harry seemed to have a certain disregard for the rules and laws set in place, if they did not align with his own, personal beliefs.

Why was it that Harry had been so certain of killing Pettigrew? Certainly, Dumbledore understood the reasons the Harry, and he himself gave, but it didn't have to be that way. Dumbledore had proved years ago, with his defeat of his once best friend, Gellert Grindelwald, that killing was not always necessary. Since Arianna died, Albus refused to kill anyone, or anything. Albus knew firsthand that there were far worse things than death, as he himself had often wished for the release death gave since that day. Wish as he might, Albus knew that it would not release him from his grief and despair, but at least he would be with his family again, and he could apologize for having not protected Arianna. No matter the reasons, Albus simply could not agree for Harry's disregard for the lives of his enemies.

After all, what was to stop Harry from becoming exactly like Tom Riddle? Harry was already powerful, and would likely grow to be more powerful than Dumbledore and Riddle combined, especially if the first years' power readings were correct. Harry was also charismatic in his beliefs, and held far more political potential than Voldemort ever had. Couple that with his current celebrity as a hero, with so many already willing to fight and die to protect him, and Harry would be greater and more dangerous than Voldemort himself could ever have imagined. Albus could not bear to think of what

would happen if Harry gave into the seduction of power as he himself once had. If Harry shifted his views that way, Albus doubted very much that anyone would ever be able to stop him.

Fortunately, for the time being, Harry voiced a strong opposition to Voldemort, and others who chose to bully and torture those weaker than themselves. Like Riddle, Harry was very secretive, but at least Harry confided in those he trusted, and had already shown himself willing, and capable, of doing anything to protect those he cared for.

Still, as he had walked up to Harry and Professor Snape, Dumbledore could feel the Elder Wand pulsating strongly. It was practically singing in response to Harry's magic. What was that all about? And why did Albus feel a powerful sense of subservience between his wand and Harry's own? Albus had thought for many years that Harry would choose the wand that was the brother of Voldemort's, but Ollivander had told him this was not so. But how could that be? If Harry was indeed a Horcrux, that wand should have fit him perfectly, but it did not. This left Albus very unprepared for Harry's reply when he asked Harry about the wand he had used before he came back. Albus did not understand why that wand had fit Harry before, but not now. Albus now had proof for his Horcrux theory, but that didn't explain why Harry had come back in time, and had not just been revived in the graveyard. When Harry told Albus of the ritual used, Albus knew that Voldemort taking his blood should have doubled the connection between them, anchoring Harry to life while that blood that now ran through Voldemort's veins kept Lily's sacrifice alive. Even though all of his theories led to this conclusion, and made perfect sense to him, nothing had happened as it should have. Instead, Albus now saw the result walking the halls of Hogwarts.

Albus stopped pacing and looked out at the grounds, and saw Harry wandlessly summon the Weasley twins to him, transfiguring them in the process. Dumbledore should have been expecting something like this from Harry, but the extent of Harry's abilities continued to astound him. Dumbledore, himself had never attained that level of mastery in wandless casting, and hear Harry was doing it casually, as if it were nothing! None of the pieces were falling together, and for valid reason, none of the portraits or monitoring spells the Hogwarts placed upon its inhabitants would report to Dumbledore on anything concerning Harry. As Headmaster, Dumbledore was used to having the sole authority in Hogwarts, but now that Harry had

returned, Hogwarts gave it's allegiance to it's true master. Harry had left Hogwarts in his power, but refused to allow Hogwarts to report anything about his activities to Dumbledore.

None of the pieces came together, including why Hogwarts only gave Harry her allegiance after he came back, and not before. Albus was no fool. He knew that Harry had left far too many holes in his story and plans. Albus felt a sense of irony as he sat back down behind his desk. For years, Albus had schemed and manipulated, while giving out only the crucial information. Now, it seemed as if Harry was turning his own game against him, and Dumbledore could do nothing about it.

'It really is unfortunate that you have just had a burning day, Fawkes. I could really use the peace right about now.' Dumbledore thought to himself as he leaned forward on his desk with his hands over his eyes and rubbed his temples.

Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire, England

'Pop'. All at once, several small pops broke the silence on the vast grounds of an impressive, centuries old manor. If the visitors were at all aware that their sudden appearance, having broken through the wards guarding the impressive mansion, set off several alarms inside, they did not show it.

Among these visitors were three aurors, clad in baby blue robes, and a single, important looking goblin, who held a sheet of rolled up parchment in his bony hands. The aurors looked distinctly ruffled, as if none of them had any wish to be there. After all, Lucius Malfoy was very powerful and well connected.

They now stood in a wide driveway that led off the lane. The lane was bordered on the left by wild, low-growing brambles, and on the right hand side by a ten foot high, neatly manicured hedge, which showed all the signs of being carefully and painstakingly trimmed daily. Without a second's pause, the official looking group strode purposefully up the marble path, passing the high hedge, which curved with them, until the hedge abruptly ended. They continued alongside a well kept lawn and garden, which ran off into the distance beyond a pair of impressive silver gates and held several pure white peacocks. Passing through the gates as if they were

nothing but smoke, the group walked briskly up to the front door of Malfoy Manor, where the goblin rose his fist at once, and knocked.

Inside the manor, Lucius Malfoy heard the alarms as his wards were breached. Though he had a fairly good idea who it might be that dared to disturb him, Lucius thought that he had enough pull within the Ministry to last at least another year or so until the Ministry had the gall to raid his home.

"Damn that insolent fool, Arthur Weasley!" he shouted. Lucius really wanted to finish up with his toy. Looking down at the teenage muggle, he guessed that the blonde was about eleven, just right for him.

She remained on her hands and knees, as she'd been trained to do, whimpering and begging for him to end her torture. The girl was honestly very beautiful for her age, with the beginning of natural, feminine curves, and little bumps where she would one day have breasts the perfect size for a nice handful. Christine Granger was her name, before Lucius had stalked her family closely, imperiusing them to move far away, before killing the rest of her family during transit. They became just another family lost in the forbidding mountains of Russia. Now, her name was either Whore or Slut, whichever he preferred.

Lucius had only had her for a few days, and had not managed to do much more than beat her. It infuriated Lucius to know that she had so far been able to throw off the Imperius curse, saving herself from being raped. When the time came, he might even give her the honor of bearing his child, as a testament to her strength, before disposing of her.

"Shut up you muggle filth!" he screamed at her, backhanding her across the face as he stepped in front of her and raising her face to meet his. Lucius loved seeing the terror in their eyes. They were weak, powerless, and filthy muggles, not worth the time he spent beating them and raping them, and they knew it.

Christine moved not an inch, afraid that Lucius would hit her again. He made it much harder for her not to spit in his face when he kneeled before her and brought his head within inches of hers. She could smell the sweat and booze on him, and she wanted more than anything to attack him, and run away, but something invisible kept

her bound where she was. She hoped and prayed that it was not magic that kept her there, as the man who called himself Lord Malfoy claimed, or she'd never escape. She had thought long and hard about the name Malfoy, but not once could she recall the name as being related to any of Noble blood. Lucius had to be lying, didn't he?

Lucius saw, and felt the fear and hatred in the girl's eyes, but before he could think much of it, he heard a small 'pop' behind him, signaling on of his house elves appearance behind him.

"What is it elf? Haven't I warned you never to interrupt me during one of my sessions!" he snarled, rounding on the poor elf in question.

"D-Dobby is s-sorry, Master," the elf squeaked, bowing low with his nose almost touching the floor. "But, there is being visitors here fom the Ministry of Magic and Gringotts Bank. They is wanting to see you, Master."

'What could be so important for Gringotts to send a representative to me? Narcissa, possibly? I haven't seen or heard anything of her whereabouts in days.' "Very well, elf. See them to my study, and inform them that I will be with them shortly. After that, you will punish youself severely for your incompetence and insubordination! See to it that you do not eat or sleep for a week, and you shall refrain from any cleaning whatsoever, and if I find that you have not followed my instructions, I will have one less elf to worry about."

Bowing deeply again, Dobby squeaked, "Y-Yes, Master. Dobby is good elf. Dobby do everything Master says." With that, the sad elf disappeared, before reappearing seconds later at the front door, to open it for their guests.

"You got lucky for the time being, Slut." With this, Lucius stood abruptly and walked briskly up the stairs, forgetting in his anger, to redo the Wards on the room, which was conveniently located behind the wall where his bookcase stood in his study.

Lucius quickly took a secret passage to his private chambers and within minutes he was refreshed and ready to deal with his unwanted guests.

Christine watched the man leave, wondering if anything during her last few days was real. She knew that she had just seen an impossible creature appear out of thin air behind the man, announcing the arrival of guests from a Ministry of Magic and a bank that she had never heard of. What was going on? The moment the man left the room, Christine felt as if a weight had lifted from her. She could move again! Still, she had no idea where she was, but if she could at least make it to the Ministry people, who sounded like they were from the government, then they might be able to help her.

Spurred on by a powerful instinct for her own survival, Christine made it through the door within seconds, and tore down the long, dark hallway.

"Could I offer you gentlemen a drink? Perhaps some firewhiskey would do?" Lucius Malfoy strode quickly into his study, seating himself comfortably in his personal chair, just behind the desk that he used to write all of his most important laws and bills.

The aurors watched Lucius closely as he entered. Lord Malfoy walked proudly, the way a man that had long been at perfect ease and comfortable with his power would. Without trying, Lucius Malfoy could intimidate any who watched him, simply by walking past them. The three rookie aurors prayed fervently that they would not have to arrest him, or they could simply forget about the last three years they had spent training, and find new careers. They had no idea who had the influence to bring such a matter to Lord Malfoy's own doorstep, but they knew a power play when they saw one, and they were caught dead center.

"We are not here for pleasantries, Lord Malfoy. I am here on behalf of Lord Black," the goblin said crisply.

"You are, are you?" Lucius was getting more furious by the second. If they were here on Lord Black's behalf, then it must have had something to do with Narcissa.

"Indeed," the goblin replied curtly. "I am Griphook, Manager of the Black family's accounts. As of two nights ago, you were given 72 hours, by which time, you must pay back the full allotted dowry that was given to you the day you took Narcissa Black to be your wife. Your marriage was annulled on the basis of violation of contract, and

therefore, you must also pay interest on the dowry, beginning from your wedding day, along with any of the costs to Gringotts to set these affairs in order. You must also pay heavy fines, which by law, you must to pay to the House of Black, according to the letter of the signed marriage contract. There will be fines for your violation of contract, the shame you have brought upon the Black family, your violation and deflowering of a woman in the Black family, disgracing her, and a very heavy fine for each and every time you or another touched her sexually without her express permission. The amount comes to approximately 200 million galleons, all of which must be paid within the next 24 hours or Gringotts will sieze the whole of your possessions and assets and deliver them to Lord Black as payment."

As Griphook spoke, Lucius' face grew redder and redder, and by the time the goblin finished speaking, his face was a very pale white, almost translucent, much to the auror's horror, and Griphook's satisfaction. Griphook was very pleased with Lord Malfoy's reaction, and was hoping very much that the arrogant wizard attempted to resist them or attack them. Attempting to resist payment would immediately result in the forfeit of everything to Lord Black, but the pompous Lord Malfoy had to already know that.

The aurors each had their wands out now, desperately praying that they would not need them, although, it now looked seemingly impossible that this would end without bloodshed. Whoever had recently been named Lord Black was cleaning out Lord Malfoy magnificently, but Gringotts refused to budge as to his identity, and certainly, none of the Blacks were saying a word as to who their new Lord was. The rumor was, Harry Potter was the new Lord Black, but either way, they sensed the beginning of a war between the two powerful families, one which could very well end up being very bloody, and economically devastating.

"I'm not sure that I have that much on hand, goblin," Lucius said coldly. "Perhaps I could arrange to pay Lord Black over time? Surely he wants the full amount, as opposed to what I could give him now."

Griphook grinned evilly. "I was well aware that you would attempt this tactic, Lord Malfoy, and have taken the liberty to draw up your accounts. During the process, all of your assets, save for this manor, and everything within it, have been liquidated. You have just enough gold in your vault right now to pay Lord Black, and we will clean it

out completely, and transfer the gold as soon as you give the word. Of course, all treasures and heirlooms that were within the vault to begin with remain there, and have been praised to determine their value, and will be added to the payment. Of course you could take a few out, but this manor and everything in it is not worth even one of those priceless artifacts."

"Gringotts had no right to touch any of my business' or properties and other assets without my consent!"

"We had every right, Lord Malfoy," Griphook snarled. "Lower your tone toward me immediately, or I will report that you had no intention on repayment to Lord Black! We have saved you from certain ruin! We've done what it would have taken you weeks to do. At least this way, you have a home to return to! We will touch nothing in this house to make the payment, I assure you. This has been done in the best interests of two of our oldest clients, so do not take our kindness for granted, Lord Malfoy. If you resist, you will forfeit everything, surely you realize this?"

Lucius growled in reply, but made no move to get up or reach for his wand. Instead, there was a sudden crash, and one of the valuable black diamond bookends fell to the floor, shattering the vase standing beside the bookcase as it fell.

In an instant, the aurors all had their wands pointing back and forth between Lucius and the bookcase. Griphook, who noted that Lord Malfoy only reached for his wand after the crash, immediately knew that Lord Malfoy was not expecting the interruption either, loath as he was to admit it. He was pleased to see, however, Lucius become even paler as his eyes swept towards the bookcase, with a panicked look in his eye.

Grinning maliciously, Griphook raised his hand towards the bookcase, casting several revealing spells in the direction. He smelled blood, and he couldn't very well deny Lord Malfoy his chance to be brought to justice for whatever he was hiding, now could he?

After a second, the results came back to the goblin. There was a hidden passage behind the wall, along with a muggle female. Surely a pureblood Lord, who spoke so outrageously against muggles and muggleborns, would not have a muggle servant?

"Auror Dawlish, there is a passage behind that bookcase. Be careful how you open it, there's a muggle female behind there."

Following Griphook's command, Auror Dawlish walked up to the bookcase. Leaning up against it he shouted. "Miss, please step away from the wall for your safety. We are here to protect you, so please back away at least ten feet. I am going to blast a hole open to reach you."

Immediately, they all heard a high pitched squeak and the shuffling of feet from behind the bookcase. Lucius looked murderous.

Auror Dawlish stepped back, raised his wand to chest height, and cried, "Bombarda Maxima!"

A moment later, an explosion ripped through the room, and there was a gaping hole where the wall and bookcase had been moments earlier. Halfway down the passage, the muggle female stood slowly, horror written all over her face.

Auror Dawlish stepped forward to the hole in the wall and the other two aurors had grim looks on their faces, keeping their wands pointed at Lord Malfoy's heart.

"You will all leave my house immediately! Goblin, do what you must to ensure my repayment to Lord Black! I give you full authorization to clean my vault out in order to do this, but you must all leave immediately!" Lucius was enraged, but also quickly calculating his chances of escaping the situation without life in Azkaban. He knew that they would not leave, but while the goblin formulated a response, Lucius quickly sized up the aurors, trying to figure a way past them to escape.

The aurors were all rookies, judging by the color of their robes, and Lucius could easily defeat them all in a duel in seconds, but the goblin had powerful magic of it's own, and Lucius wasn't so positive of his chances there. Even then, there was the girl, and a slim chance of one of the aurors getting to her and disappearing before Lucius could get to her or take them all out. That hurt things even worse. The fact that they had broken through his wards meant that they had at least one curse breaker with them, and since the curse breaker remained outside, it was quite probable that the curse

breaker in question was currently maintaining wards to keep him from escaping by any magical means. That posed a serious problem. Unfortunately, Lucius was trapped. He was foolish, but not stupid. He had no choice but to cooperate.

"Don't be stupid, Lord Malfoy! We cannot leave now," Griphook said coolly. "Who is this girl? And why is she abused so?"

"She is my concubine! I can treat her as I wish, so her pain has only just begun, I swear it to you!"

'Concubine? Merlin's pants! If that is true, then we will have no choice but to leave her here. The question is, how would Lord Malfoy acquire such a concubine without alerting the other purebloods, and why did he not have his property registered?' "I was not aware that you had any concubines, Lord Malfoy. Surely she would have been registered as part of your assets?"

The girl looked on horrorstricken from where Auror Dawlish sat treating her many wounds. The female auror happened to be a healer, and was closing her wounds and treating her scars, which apparently, would all be gone within the next few minutes. This woman was good!

Lucius Malfoy again said nothing, confirming Griphook's suspicions.

"Having an unregistered concubine is illegal, Lord Malfoy."

'Thank Merlin I've already disposed of the other two,' Lucius thought grimly.

"How did you obtain her and where is her family now?"

Lucius scowled. "Her father owed me business debts, and I have the paperwork in the top drawer of my desk. I believe her family moved out of the country, to save themselves the disgrace of having a slut for a daughter. I have not yet had the time to register my new aquisition." Moving quickly, Lucius began going through the drawer, appearing to look for the documents.

"Liar!" Christine's voice surprised them all, and Lucius jumped back. Her silent sobs had stopped and fresh tears were streaming down her face as she shot Lucius a glare of utmost loathing.

"Shutup, Slut! You will be silent or pay the price later!"

"You bastard! You murdered my family!"

"I said -," Lucius began, as he raised his wand to curse her. A second later, he found himself blasted against the wall by the third auror, who still had his wand aimed at Lucius' heart.

"Lord Malfoy, if this child was your concubine, she would not have been able to speak after you ordered her to remain silent," the auror said slowly, still very shocked at his own actions. "That is all the evidence we need. Lord Lucius Malfoy, you are hereby placed under arrest, pending the investigation into the unlawful kidnapping of a muggle, and possible murder of said muggle's family."

Seconds later, Christine watched as Lucius was placed in magic restraining handcuffs by the auror who had blasted him. If she hadn't seen it for herself, she would never have believed that magic was possible. Now, she was nothing but thankful to the strange man, even as wary as she was of the stick in the man's hand. Still, those sticks didn't do that all the time, she noted. The man who saved her and the nice lady both had sticks and badges and were using them to heal her. For the first time in days, Christine smiled in relief, before realizing suddenly that she had nowhere to go. What would she do now? Her parents were dead, she had no money, and she didn't want to go to an orphanage!

"What is your name, child?" Griphook asked, startling the girl.

Looking up at the goblin, Christine felt her fear begin to creep up onto her anew. "C-Christine."

"What is your surname, Christine. Do you know how long you have been here? And is it true that your family is now dead?"

"M-My name is Christine Gr-Granger," she stuttered out. "I've only been here a few days. Before he murdered them, it was just me, my mom, and my dad. W-We were going to move to the mountains in France."

Griphook's eyes went wide. "Granger, did you say?"

The girl nodded.

"Are you by chance related to a Miss Hermione Granger?"

The girl nodded again, a look of dread dawning on her. "S-She's my cousin. He didn't get her too did he?"

Oh sweet Merlin. This was getting worse for Lord Malfoy by the second. At least this would solve several problems as for what to do with the child. "No. Lord Malfoy has not laid a hand on your cousin. In fact, if he had, I daresay that Lord Potter-Black would have murdered him several times over after cursing him for all eternity."

The aurors all gasped, and Auror Dawlish actually dropped his wand. Lucius, on the other hand, stood there stiff as a body bound statue, pure and utter terror flashing through his eyes and his heart was beating so hard that he was hopeful that it would explode. None of this was lost on Christine, who was just as bright as Hermione. She actually smiled a bit wider at the varied reactions. Even the solemn goblin with speechless at his own words.

"Is there something going on with Hermione? Who's this Lord Potter-Black that sounds so powerful?"

The aurors and Lucius remained silent, each one's mouths opening and closing, but no sounds coming out. After a few more seconds of silence, Griphook answered. "Miss Granger, I know it is a lot to ask of you, but if you would trust me, I could show you better than I could tell you the answer to your questions. I also believe that I will be able to take you to a much safer place, and alert Lord Potter-Black, along with your cousin, fairly quickly."

Christine wasn't particularly sure about this goblin, who seemed to know so much of what was going on, but if the people with badges trusted the goblin enough to allow it, would it really hurt? It wasn't as if she had much choice at the moment. Anything was better than the house they were in right now. Seeing her only chance, she nodded.

"Very well. Auror Dawlish, how are her wounds coming along?"

Auror Dawlish and the female auror looked Christine over once more, and announced that she was now in perfect health, without even a single physical scar to show for her suffering.

"Good, Miss Granger will accompany me to the perimeter of the wards. I will then take her personally to safety, and ensure that the appropriate parties are notified. The aurors will receive my report of this from Gringotts by tomorrow morning."

The aurors all nodded and while the female auror opened the door, the other two pulled a sick looking Lucius Malfoy through and out to the gate to his property before disappearing into thin air.

When they made it out to the perimeter of the wards, Griphook turned to Bill Weasley. "Mr. Weasley, I thank you for your admirable work. I will make sure that my report praises your work very much. Now, you may return to Gringotts to file your own report. After that, you are free to take a two week vacation, under my authority. Spend it with your family, and maybe I will have a promotion of sorts set in order for you when you return."

Bill looked confused as ever, but disappeared with a 'crack' and a broad smile, never realizing why Griphook was so thankful for him doing his job, yet.

"Are you ready, Miss Granger?"

"Yes, sir. And thank you for everything, just in case I don't see you again."

It was rare for a human to thank a goblin with genuine appreciation, and it brought a grin to Griphook. "Miss Granger, you are very welcome. And I am quite sure that we will see each other again. I am also thankful that we found you, because I hate to think of what the results would have been if we left you there. Now, take my hand firmly and don't let go."

Christine took a firm hold of Griphook's hand, and the goblin and child disappeared a second later.

Emrys Dormitory, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Shortly under an hour after the Harry, Gabby, and Hermione had left the spot beside the lake after watching the Weasley twins disappear quickly to find their dormmates, they found themselves in the Emrys house common room watching the twins usher in the newly dubbed

'Wardens', named because of the Emrys house seal. Harry thought it was a bit weird. The Wardens of Emrys? The Emrys Wardens? He could hear it being announced in his mind that the Wardens of House Emrys had won the quidditch cup. It didn't sound quite right, but the school had taken to it already, and it wasn't as if he had any better ideas.

The twins looked grimly at Harry, who was seated in his favorite spot, in between Gabby and Hermione.

Catching sight of the twins and their 'condition', Harry grinned. Frowning, Gabby and Hermione turned to look toward the door, and promptly broke into another fit of giggles, joining the several others who had been snickering at the twins' expense since they laid eyes on them.

"Alright folks, Harry said he has something to show us all," Fred called out. "Give him your full, 'undivided' attention."

Parvati and Lavender broke into giggles again at the poor joke.

The twins glared at Harry, but were soon standing beside him. "Harry, mate, we did your little favor, so do you mind changing us back now? Most of the school has already seen us, and you know this means war, right?"

Harry gave George a predatory grin, which made both twins gulp. "Well then, war it is. But before I undo my charms, I have one more favor to ask of you two."

This earned Harry another glare from them.

"Hey Harry, are you three going to keep whispering over there all night, or can we get on with the show?" Angelina was seated on the other couch, across from Harry, Gabby, and Hermione. On either side of her were Alicia and Katie.

"Give us a minute, Angelina. The twins have something that I need to borrow."

The twins raised their eyebrows as one. "And what that might be, mate?" Fred asked.

"Yes, what could we possibly have that a scrawny little git like you would want," George continued.

Harry smiled evilly and motioned them both to lean in so that he could whisper. "A map. A very old map."

The twins paled considerably, and their reaction wasn't at all lost on the crowd. Whatever Harry had told them was a definite surprise. Fred and George looked at each other quickly, and leaned back down to whisper to Harry.

"Harry, mate."

"How in Morgana's bloated right tit, do you know about that?"

"And do you honestly think we are going to allow anyone that we just barely met to borrow that map?"

"It's been the secret to our success for the last two years!"

Harry leaned forward, carefully considering his options for a moment, and also enjoying his game with the twins. They had no idea what he knew, and he could lead them on all day if he wished. "I wish I could answer your first question right now, but I really do have to be careful who I trust with that information. Would you agree to lend it to me so I can make an improved version of for myself, if I agreed to introduce you to two of the marauders... say Padfoot and Moony?"

The twins were stonewalled. They stood there silently, stunned speechless, with shocked, blissful, dreamy looks on their faces, each sporting a marvelously bloody nose, for several moments. Finally, after several minutes, during which, the onlookers were very amused once more, Fred found his voice, even though it sounded more like a croak.

"Harry, if you're having us on-"

"I'm not."

"But how could you possibly-" George's voice was high and squeaky like a girl's, making half the room roar with laughter.

"You'll find that out soon enough."

"Can you really do that? Both of them?"

"You got it."

"Are you sure, mate?"

"Yep."

The twins looked at each other in awe before coming to a silent agreement. "Can we get it to you in private later?" the twins asked in unison.

"Naturally," Harry replied pompously with a grin and his chin in the air, thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Then you got yourself a deal," the twins said, reaching out to shake Harry's hand to seal the pact.

"Thanks, you guys are the best." Harry quickly undid his charms, and the twins reverted to normal.

"We know we are," Fred said, patting Harry's shoulder from behind.

"So don't you forget it," George finished, smiling broadly and moving to stand beside Angelina.

"Okay, everyone. I guess you are all wondering why I brought you all back here to show you something," Harry began.

There were nods of agreement from everyone, except Gabby. They were all quietly wondering what other surprises Harry Potter had up his sleeves for them. Fidgeting, the twins feverently hoped that it wasn't another prank. They silently agreed that he was too good for his own good, and they would have to think hard about how to get one over on him. Let the prank war begin!

"Before I begin, I would like to say that what I wish to show you all is very secret and I trust everyone in this room to keep this a House secret. I have a story to tell you all after I show you, but it will sound pretty ridiculous, so before I say anything else I want you to all know that I am telling you all the truth."

Harry raised his wand to his own heart. "I, Harry James Potter, hereby swear upon my life and magic, that anything I say to those in this room with me right now, from now until midnight tonight, will be the full truth, to the best of my knowledge."

A second, and a flash of light later, everyone in the room was silent as they realized how serious Harry was.

"Would that include me, Pup?" Noone had noticed Sirius enter the room.

"Of course it does, Sirius. I'm sorry I didn't think to have you here with us before. I thought you might be busy."

"Nonsense, Harry. I'm never too busy to be there when you need me, Pup," Sirius said, chuckling softly as he sat in his favorite recliner.

"Well, now you all know that everything I say is the truth, or I'd fall dead. But in case I do, do me the favor of getting a picture of me starkers and put it in every girls bathroom with a permanent sticking charm. I'd love to see what goes on in there, ya know what I mean?" Harry said laughing heartily.

Every girl in the room glared at Harry, while the Weasley twins had nasty, positively evil grins on their faces. They looked like hunters that had their prey nice and cornered now. Harry, who caught their grins, gulped. He would have to keep a very close eye on the twins, and his clothes.

"Alright, on a more serious note. I trust everyone in this room for different reasons, some of which will become apparent once I get to tell you all my story, but before we go anywhere, I need each of you to swear a wizard's or witch's oath, not to repeat anything I say, or mention anything I show or tell you to anyone who is not now in this room with us."

The twins looked at each other, and across at Harry. They had been expecting something like this, but before they could step forward and swear their oaths, Sirius beat them to it.

Standing up, Sirius gave Harry a protective look. "Harry, you've already taken a great risk with your oath, and you obviously have something very important to show us. I want you to know that I will

never repeat anything you tell me unless you ask me to, and I will never betray you. I see you as my own son. So-," at this point Sirius pointed his wand at his own heart. "I, Sirius Orion Black, the Marauder known as Padfoot, do hereby swear upon my life and magic to Harry James Potter, the Marauder known as Blazewing, Son of Prongs, that I will never reveal any of his secrets, and to never reveal what I learn tonight, unless Harry gives me leave to by his own free will. So mote it be."

Harry stood silently for a second, floored by Sirius' knowing who had been secretly visiting him in Azkaban, and by his naming Harry as a Marauder. "I, Harry James Potter, the Marauder known as Blazewing, Son of the Marauder Prongs, do hereby accept your oath Padfoot. So mote it be."

A flash of light later, as magic accepted the oath, and Sirius embraced Harry fiercely, with rare tears of happiness streaming down his face. "I knew it. I knew it had to be you. Noone else knew our secret."

"I'm glad you figured it out, Padfoot. I hope you enjoyed the food I brought you when you were in Azkaban?"

"So that wasn't just a phoenix, huh?"

"Nope."

"Harry, what are you two talking about?" Gabby asked. "And why did he call you Blazewing?" Sirius and everyone else looked at her in astonishment, surprised that she didn't already know this about him.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, Gabby. I wanted it to be as much a surprise for you as for everybody else," Harry said as he stepped to the middle of the couches and transformed.

~I'm sorry, Love. I hope you aren't upset with me. I wanted it to be special. You already know so much about me, it was hard figuring out how to surprise you. I hope you forgive me. I love you.~

~Don't be silly, Love. I'm not mad. I'm actually really pleased that you would do that just to make me happy. There's nothing to forgive, and I love you too.~

Harry was enjoying the feeling of the girls cooing and stroking his feathers, while Sirius had become Padfoot, and was getting a nice bellyrub for the show.

The twins were silently cursing their luck. They were split between awe of the two Marauders, one of whom was the legendary Padfoot, and horror at having declared a pranking war with a Marauder who was the son of the legendary Prongs, and godson of the legendary Padfoot. They would have to pull everything they knew to stand a chance against the Legendary Marauders.

Suddenly, the twins broke through the crowd and threw themselves before Harry and Sirius, who now sat side by side, amused by the twins antics as they were now on their hands and knees, bowing over and over and saying, "We're not worthy, Masters, We're not worthy!"

This confused everyone else in the room who was watching. Harry was laughing as he and Sirius transformed back into themselves. "You do realize, we are still at war, right?" The twins gulped audibly, and made silent notes to owl Bill for the best books on warding and cursebreaking he had. They would need every advantage they could think of, even more than they knew.

As they retreated back to their original positions behind the other couch, neither noticed the discreet listening charm that Harry applied to the tips of their ears. Harry smiled, satisfied with his work. That would give him a heads up on anything they planned, and they would never know what hit them.

Sirius seemed almost as confused as everyone else in the room. "Harry, what was that about. That acted like they know me."

"Oh, they do, Sirius," Harry replied laughing. In a quieter note, Harry whispered in his ear, "They have the map."

"They do?" Sirius was grinning broadly now, and happily glaring hungrily at the twins, the way a wolf would stare down his prey. "And they declared war on you?"

"Yep."

"Ahh, so sweet. I guess that evens out the playing field a bit, don't you think?"

"I do."

Harry and Sirius looked maniacally at the Weasley twins, and they bolted from the room, only to be strung up in the air by their ankles before they had made it around the corner.

"Good one, Padfoot," Harry said, smiling easily as he leaned back against the couch.

"You too, Blazewing," Sirius replied, grinning like a madman.

"Yeah, well. Great minds think alike."

"I'll second that."

"Are you going to let us down anytime soon?" Fred yelled. Tonks blew a raspberry at him, and the Patil twins burst out in the giggles.

Neville was holding his gut from laughing so hard.

"You think it's funny, do you? Why don't you join us!" George cried, and another flash of light later, Neville was in his place.

Almost everyone was rolling on the floor by now, but Harry cast a 'finite' on Fred and Neville, and cleared his throat loudly to get everyone's attention. "Okay, back on subject. We really need to do this if we want to make it down to dinner on time."

After Harry was sure that he had everyone's attention, he motioned for them to either take their oaths, or leave.

Not surprisingly, the Weasley twins were first. "Harry, we trust you and we know now that it has to something seriously important that you have to tell us, especially after the last few minutes. We are honored that you trust us, and we will always do our best to remain your friends, and we will never betray you." With that, they gave their oaths and were quickly followed by everyone else in the room.

"Perfect," said Harry. "I'd like you all to know that I'm really grateful that you are bearing with me on this. I'm sorry that I had to require

the oaths from all of you, but when we get to where we are going, and I tell you my story, hopefully you will understand why. In the future, we will need all the friends we can get. We will need to stand strong together if we are to survive. Follow me."

Hermione and Padma gave each other a look at the word 'survive', but they were just as confused as everyone else. Silently, Harry led everyone to his room, where many of the girls looked around, confused, but squealed when they saw Selene.

Gabby walked over and gently stroked Selene's feathers, enjoying the peaceful feeling she got when she was around the beautiful phoenix.

"Gabrielle, is this your room too?" Hermione asked. Always the observant one.

Gabby nodded. "Yes. I have a room too, but ever since Harry and I met, we've been on our own. We've shopped together, practically lived together in the same room at the Leaky Cauldron for the last few weeks, and we've slept in the same bed from the very first night. I've grown so used to it, and we are both much more comfortable that way."

There were looks of admiration from the twins and Neville, one of utmost pride from Sirius, and a mixture of shock and jealousy from the rest of the girls.

"Wow," Lavender said softly, reaching out slowly to stroke Selene. "You two must be really close."

Harry put his arm around Gabby, and held her close. "We are. Gabby is wonderful."

There was an "awe!" from all the girls in the room, and Gabby had tears of happiness in her eyes.

"So," Harry began, as he stepped closer to the foot of the bed. "I need you to please step back, away from my trunk for a moment."

The crowd stepped back, and Harry pointed his wand toward the trunk, and it popped open, with a hole just wide enough for a person to stand in. "Okay, I'll go first to show you how it's done. Make sure

you let the person in front of you move before you jump in. And don't worry, this is the only time you'll have to enter this way."

With that, Harry jumped into the trunk, and disappeared. Those that looked down into the trunk could see Harry standing in a dark room as he moved to the side to allow the rest entry.

A few minutes later, and everyone was now in the trunk, looking around curiously, and the lid to the trunk slammed shut, causing many of them to shout their worries.

"Don't worry. I will show you how to get out, and an easier way to get in next time. First off, for your safety, please note that only Gabby or myself can open this trunk, as it's wards are tied to our blood. No one without our blood and one of our permission, which must be granted of our own free will, without the use of spells or potions, can open it without being trapped inside it, in a very unpleasant holding cell. While I am going to give you each something, in order for you to come back here anytime you wish, please note that nothing can be removed from here without both of our express permission. Violation of this rule has an even harsher punishment, due to the fact that everything from every one of my vaults, except my gold, is held in this trunk for the time being."

"Yeah, and this Mansion is totally wicked. And didn't you say you would visit me in here last night Harry, Gabrielle?"

Harry turned, and saw Ginny coming out of the library. He immediately felt guilty. He had completely forgotten that he promised to meet her the night before, and silently vowed to make it up to her somehow. "Umm, we kind of got caught up, Ginny. I'm sorry," Harry said slowly. "I really am. I was looking forward to giving you a private tour, and maybe hanging out for a few hours."

"Harry."

"Yes, Love?"

"We can still give Ginny her own room here. That way she can stay anytime she likes, and you'll be able to spend more time getting to know each other."

Harry looked thoughtful for a moment, and the Ginny's anxiousness at Gabby's suggestion was not lost on him. "What do you think Ginny?"

Ginny squealed. "Oh, Harry! I'd love that! Are you sure though? I don't want you doing this because you think you have to."

"No worries, Ginny," Harry chortled. "I think Gabby's idea is perfect. In fact, I believe there are enough rooms for everyone here to have their own."

Instead of replying, Ginny ran up to Harry and launched herself at him, wrapping her arms around him in a bonecrushing hug, before planting a kiss firmly on his lips.

The twins were still looking at Ginny as if in a daze, obviously not believing their eyes. "G-Ginny?"

Blushing, Harry was immediately grateful that their shock at seeing their little sister there hadn't worn off, or they'd probably have throttled him for kissing her in front of everyone else.

Ginny turned to look at her brothers, barely realizing that they were there in the room with them. "Oh, hey Fred, George. You're going to love this place." Ginny paused for a moment, still holding onto Harry tightly. "I hope you don't mind, Harry, but I was reading one of those really old books that had your seal on the cover. It was on a seperate, really fancy, antique bookcase, filled with others with the same seal and binding."

"Nahh, go ahead, Ginny, but be very careful with those. If they have that seal on them, they were written by Merlin himself." Everyone except Harry and Gabby gasped.

"Thanks!" With that, Ginny gave Harry another kiss, hugged her brothers, and grabbed Gabby's hand, dragging her off through the door with her.

"Bye, Love." Harry called after Gabby. A second later, Gabby peeked her head back in the door and blew him a kiss before disappearing around the corner to follow Ginny.

"Harry, how is it, that you have books written by Merlin and why did she say that it was your seal?" Neville asked cautiously, almost afraid of the answer.

Harry winced. "Ahh... well... that's part of the story, but to be blunt, Merlin is my ancestor. Harry flashed the Emrys Head of House ring. Our house seal is Merlin's seal. He once wore this very ring as Lord Emrys. Sorry I didn't mention it before, but I would have thought that nearly everyone here knew enough history to recognize the name Emrys."

Several of the girls were too stunned to speak.

"Fred."

"Yeah George?"

"We're really in for it."

"That's putting it lightly, we're doomed."

"We declared war-"

"On the bloody Heir of Merlin," the twins finished together dramatically.

"Come on you guys, that isn't even half the news," Harry said merrily, waving at them all to follow him through the door and ignoring the looks of stunned disbelief on all their faces.

"What more could there possibly be?"

"I don't know, Padma. What about you Katie, any ideas?"

"Ask Hermione."

Before Hermione could say anything, a scream was heard from somewhere outside the room, and everyone ran through the door and found themselves in the vast room that made up the main living area of the mansion.

"Ginny!" Fred called out.

"Hey little sis, is everything okay?" George said as they approached her.

"She's fine. We just got suprised, that's all." Gabby was standing just behind Ginny, who had been startled out of her seat on one of the two massive, jet black sectional couches that surrounded an ornate crystal center table.

"By who?"

"By us." The voice of the goblin surprised them all, and Harry surprised them further when he stepped up to the goblin.

"Griphook, what's going on? Has something happened?"

"Indeed it has, Lord Potter. Can they be trusted?" Griphook asked curtly, glancing around as everyone filled into the room, watching him and Christine both carefully.

"Of course they can. Tell me what happened and what do you mean by us?"

"We have collected on the payment that Lord Malfoy owed you. He now has nothing, save his Wiltshire manor, and everything within it, but that's not where the problem came in. Rather, that is where we stumbled upon the problem, which is why Lord Lucius Malfoy is currently a guest of the dementors of Azkaban, awaiting his trial."

"What brought you here?" Harry was concerned, but also getting confused as to why Griphook had sought him out.

"I didn't necessarily attempt to seek you out, Lord Potter. I simply sought to bring the child here, to the safest place I could think of, considering who she is," Griphook said solemnly.

"And who might she be?"

"Me." The small voice shocked Harry, and nearly everyone else in the room. And noone was prepared for the unearthly shriek of 'Christine!' as Hermione launched herself at the girl.

After a minute, the shock wore off and Harry asked, "Hermione, you know her?"

Hermione smiled happily, still hugging Christine tightly. "This is my cousin, Christine Granger."

"Hi." Christine said shyly, not sure of what to say, but caught Fred's eye and looked him up and down approvingly.

Harry moved closer to Christine, trying his best to convey feelings of comfort and safety to her as he held out his hand. "I'm Harry. You're welcome to join us, and I'll give you a portal stone when I give everyone else one. That way, you can come back anytime you want. I picked Ginny's password myself, but you will all be able to pick your own. Don't worry, no one but the person I hand the stone to will be able to use it unless that person brings a passenger along for the ride. But no matter what, no one with ill intent will be able to enter this mansion and my wards automatically disable all magical concealment."

"So that's why I reverted to my natural state!" shouted Tonks angrily, who though still looking halfway like herself, nonetheless looked very different than she normally did. "I haven't been able to metamorph since I've been in here."

"Oh yeah, sorry Tonks. Hold on, I'll lift that one just for you." A second later, Tonks squealed as her hair turned her favorite, bright pink again.

"Anyways, what happened that made you bring Christine here?" Looking around, Harry realized that Griphook had already disappeared.

Christine looked uncomfortable, her eyes downcast.

"Okay, nevermind. We can talk about it when you are ready, or never. It really is up to you. We don't want to push you. I certainly don't, but I won't be able to help you unless I know what happened," Harry said softly.

"I know, but can it be just you? And Hermione? Please?"

Looking at each other, Harry and Hermione nodded and took her to a couch on the other end of the room. After a few minutes, the air began to grow heavy with power, and they all felt the pulses of

magic from across the room. Noone could miss the way Harry and Hermione were both shaking with fury. Oh, this was bad. This was very, VERY bad.

A second later, Hermione and Christine both broke into tears, leaning against each other, and a loud, enraged "What!" was heard from Harry before he disappeared in a flash of fire.

Nobody said a word for a few minutes. Gabby felt out along their bond, and felt the searing anger from Harry.

~Are you alright, Mon chéri? What happened?~

~I'm fine, Love. If you don't mind, would you please tell them how we met, and everything that happened before I came back? It might take me a while to deal with Lucius, and I don't want any of you to worry.~

~Are you sure? That's something really important to you.~

~I am. I love you and trust you, my wonderful Gabrielle. I already have my pensieve set so all you to do is show them, and it will keep everyone from worrying about me. It will also give me the extra time so I don't have to hurry back, not that I mind being with you every moment of the day. But, I'd like to give Lucius what a small bit of what he deserves for the way he treated you, and what I just found out.~

~What about Christine? Muggles can't use pensieves?~

~She's no muggle, Love. That's half of what has me so pissed off. With her permission I searched for any other traces of magic on her and found that her magical core had been completely bound and the bindings have Dumbledore's signature written all over them. I haven't told her or Hermione yet, so please wait on that. I will remove them personally, and she will be able to be sorted and join us in classes.~

~Why would Dumbledore want to bind her magic?~

~I haven't the foggiest. Just take care of things on that end while I deal with Lucius, please.~

~I'll do that. Come back safe, Mon chéri.~

~Of course, Love. Got to go.~

"Where did Harry go? How did he just disappear like that? You can't apparate inside the grounds of Hogwarts. It says so in Hogwarts, A History"

"That was phoenix fire, Hermione," Sirius said softly. "Not much is known about magical animagi since there have been so very few of them, but it is said that while they can the characteristics and physical abilities of their animal like any animagus, they also retain their form's powers, which in Harry's case, allows him to flash from place to place the way a phoenix would. Only, I've never heard of an animagus able to use those powers while still in their human form. It might have something to do with his form being a royal phoenix, but I'd have to research that."

"Wicked." The twins were both wishing they had those powers. It would make it so much easier for them not to get caught.

"But that doesn't explain how Harry was able to bypass the wards, Sirius," Hermione pressed on relentlessly.

"Hermione, those wards don't stop magical creatures such as a phoenix or house elf. If it did, the Hogwarts elves wouldn't be nearly as good as they are, and they can't be seen popping in and out everywhere. Magical creatures have their own forms of magical travel. But I'd bet my last galleon that the wards still couldn't stop Harry. He's too powerful, but as the Heir of Merlin, and the Heir of all four founders, Harry owns Hogwarts and can control the wards as he sees fit."

"That's not possible," Daphne said firmly, hiding her own surprise behind her usual emotionless mask

"Daphne's right. Auntie said the founders' lines died out hundreds of years ago," Susan said.

"You'll have your answers soon enough," Gabby nearly shouted. "Sirius, I have no idea how you knew, since I know Harry hasn't had the time to tell you yet, but I expect it has something to do with the letter Remus sent you."

Sirius nodded.

"Anyways, Harry prepared his own pensieve for this. Today, we will be watching eleven years worth of memories in a time span of fifteen minutes. I know it seems impossible, but Harry created this pensieve for this sole purpose. As we go, feel free to practice and learn anything you don't know, as this will cover the first four years at Hogwarts, with a very heavy training period of seven years afterward. There will be holes in the timeline of the memories, but those are personal to Harry, so you can understand his reluctance to show them."

"The first four years at Hogwarts? Are you sure about that?" Tonks asked, unsure of what she had gotten herself into.

"I'm positive. You'll all be very surprised at them."

"Whose memories are they then?" Tracey called out, not to be outdone by the former Gryffindor.

"They are all Harry's own memories."

"How can that be?"

"Give us a break, Gabrielle. Harry just started his first year, just like us."

"Don't any of you get it?" Hermione yelled, before blushing. Everyone was now looking at her expectantly. Surprised at her own outburst, Hermione continued shyly. "Look, no first year knows all the magic that Harry does, do they? I doubt that even the seventh years do. And didn't any of you catch the part where the sorting hat said 'welcome back the Warrior' when it referred to Lord Emrys? Surely, none of you missed the sorting hat welcome Harry and Gabrielle both 'back' to Hogwarts? Even the sorting hat called Harry the Heir of all four founders when it said that the Heir of Merlin would only return when the blood and magic of the four founders combined. Doesn't it make sense? The only thing I can figure is that somehow, Harry and Gabrielle both came back in time, and the sorting hat knew it."

Hermione said all this very fast, and now stood trying to catch her breath while everyone looked at her in amazement, half of them surprised that Hermione would even rant the way she just had. Gabby and Sirius were surprised too, although they should have expected Hermione of all people to catch on.

"Very good, Hermione. Harry was right about you. You really are the brightest witch of our age." Gabby said, breaking the silence. "Come on everyone, we need to get a move on if we want to make it to dinner."

Hermione stood quietly beside Parvati and Padma looking pleased with herself, and blushing madly at the compliment.

Following Gabby, the group passed several rooms, which caused anyone who looked in to gape at the contents with excitement. But after a few minutes, Gabby brought the group to the end of the hallway, and an empty wall. No one knew what to expect, especially when Gabby began pacing back and forth in front of the wall, but none of them were too surprised to see a door appear. By now, they were nearly shockproof.

"Where does that lead?"

"Don't worry Alicia, this just leads to our room of requirement. There are only two known to exist today, this one, and another that is somewhere in Hogwarts. Come on in. This is an extra measure of security to protect our most valuable secrets."

Following closely, the group found themselves in a comfortable sitting room, where the fireplace was set in the middle of the lounge area. Throughout the room, there were a few of Harry's most priceless artefacts, including the Philosopher's Stone, which Sirius noticed almost at once, and was now pouring over. Harry had taken it's golden stand from his vault, and it was now placed behind impenetrable wards, of Merlin's and Harry's designs, next to a shelf that held several small, priceless trinkets.

"Gabrielle, what is this stone? I can feel it pulsing, calling out to me."

"Naturally, you would, Sirius. You must ignore that. That is what leads most men to their doom. That stone is the only one in existence. It is the true Philosopher's Stone, the final of seven

stages, the first stage being the one stumbled upon by the famed alchemist Nicolas Flamel over half a millenia ago. Unfortunately for him, due to the requirements for the last six stages on the stone Nicolas Flamel will never succeed in creating anything beyond what he now has, but even if he did succeed in creating the sixth stage, I know for a fact that it would be impossible for him to coat the stone with the one ingredient that is required to transform the stone into it's final stage."

"Why is that?" Tonks asked.

"Because," Gabby said simply. "He would need the willingly sacrificed blood of one of the nine Divines, and there is only one person he can get that from."

"The nine Divines?"

"I've never heard of them, have you Sirius?"

"Nope, I haven't either, Hermione."

"Be patient," Gabby said, interrupting them. "Those questions will be answered in these memories, but for now, we are running out of time. Let's go."

A few of the girls mumbled, but nevertheless, everyone formed a circle around the pensieve, joined hands, and were drawn into the pensieve less than a minute later.

"Sweet Merlin." Fifteen minutes had passed since the group disappeared, and Harry now watched as they reappeared and stumbled around a bit. Harry was amused at how several of his guests still was stonewalled expressions. Even Sirius, who had an indication of what to expect, came out looking as if he'd seen a ghost for the first time. He was pale white, and clutching the end of the couch for support.

"That's unbelievable," Katie said slowly as she tried to slow her heartbeat down.

"Yeah, I know," Harry replied, startling everyone. Tonks, who had barely managed to lean haphazardly against the back of the couch, jumped and slipped, falling hard on her bum.

"Argh. Harry!" Harry was surprised to see a rare smile come from Daphne, and watched the twins help Tonks to her feet while Lavender and the Patils giggled madly.

"Sorry, Dora," Harry mumbled, wincing at the glare she gave him. Turning to face everyone once more, Harry continued. "Anyways, I left a lot out of those memories, but I made sure to include all of my training, except for the top secret stuff."

"No wonder you're so good at magic, Harry." Parvati was looking very appreciatively at Harry. "I got to learn and practice a lot, right along beside you. We all did."

"That was my intention."

"You and Ron were best mates before?" Ginny asked curiously. The twins nodded their agreement, still not able to believe it.

"Ron, Hermione, and myself. We were called the 'Golden Trio'. It's pretty funny when you realize some of the rough patches we went through together. I'm actually surprised our friendship lasted that long."

"So... it's for real then? All of it?" Su Li asked quietly. The normally shy girl suprised half of the people that were near her. Normally Su Li was so quiet that noone really paid any attention to her being there.

"That's right. That's why I wanted to show it to you all. This is my story, it's where I come from, but from here on out, where I go from here will be with those I trust and care about. You've all just seen for yourselves that Voldemort will return... that he isn't really gone. At this very moment, Voldemort is here in this very castle, intent on returning to power. I might not be able to put him off forever, but I have every intention of holding him back for at least a few years. Until then, we must all prepare for the inevitable."

Nearly everyone in the room flinched at hearing Voldemort's name. Only Gabby and Sirius seemed unphased. "Oh, come on! It's just a name. Why is everyone so afraid of it? Does Voldemort-," everyone flinched again, " show up and murder someone everytime they say his name? All it does is make you fear him more, and that's exactly

what Voldemort wants. During the first war, that kind of fear is what made it so easy for Voldemort to gain so much power, and it will again because nobody will want to admit it when he does return. People will believe what they want to, and that kind of fear will make it much easier for Voldemort to hide his return because nobody will want it to be true. It's far more logical to fear the man himself, and what he can do, rather than his name. His name can't do anything to you."

"That's just it, Harry," Tonks said quietly.

"We've just seen it with our own eyes, and we still don't want it to be true," Susan said.

"That's what gives him half of his power," Harry replied exasperatedly. "Just because we don't want it to happen, doesn't mean it won't. The reality is, sooner or later, Voldemort will return and we have to be ready. We may just be kids, but look at what happened during Voldemort's first reign. Most of those who fought him before are dead. Those who remain are few. This time, it's our fight. This time, it's our turn to stand against him, to protect ourselves and our friends and families. To make this world a better place for when we have children of our own. If we do nothing, we'll have already lost, and I won't... no I can't... accept that."

"Ere 'ere, Harry," the twins said together. "We're with ya, mate."

"I am, too. Voldemort killed almost my whole family. I owe him," Susan said with passion in her eyes.

"I-I'll stand with you till the end, Harry," Neville said bravely. The normally shy boy had a fire in his eyes, and determination written all over him. "I don't know how much I'll be able to do, but it could have been me. I won't stand by while monsters like Bellatrix Lestrange destroy more families. I know I might die, we all might, but I promise to take as many death eaters with me as I can."

"Well said, Neville," Sirius said encouragingly. "I'm sure we all feel the same, Harry. We're with you all the way." Looking around at them all, Harry saw each of them nod, and though several of them looked scared, they all had a fierce look of determination, and a willingness to fight to the bitter end.

"That settles it," Harry said finally, after a few minutes. "We can use this place to train and study, since it has everything we need, including a library, potions lab, and dueling arena. All we have to do is figure out when we are going to meet, and what our goals are going to be. I know we all want to survive, but there are other problems in the wizarding world. Among these are elf and goblin rights, along with the rights of others like Veela. There are also several problems when it comes to how muggleborns are viewed, treated, and the way they are brought into our world. These are just a couple examples of political problems. I have plenty of financial backing, but it would still be nice to put our studies to some use, providing hard to get potions and potion materials. We can write our own books, detailing so much that has been lost to history, and new secrets that have yet to be revealed. What about wands, wand materials, staves, and broomsticks? Have any of you noticed yet, how so many classrooms are now empty at Hogwarts? I have the ability to change that, to expand the Hogwarts curriculum, and fine tune it to be more efficient. There are endless possibilities. To fight Voldemort, we will have to be entirely self sufficient, with our own army. We will have need to have each of us using our own talents to prepare. Gabby, Susan and Daphne, I know for a fact that you two would be great running the political side of our plans, and with all of our families' and friends' backing, we have more than enough power in the wizarding world to force any changes through. Sirius, you, Tonks, and Remus were once aurors, and I know you can both duel, but you also recruit well. Hermione, Christine, and Padma, I know that you three could figure out a way to reform Hogwarts. Neville, Hannah, and Lavender have always been good at Herbology, and would do an awesome job gathering herbs and other materials. I also know that Neville would make an excellent commander, good at taking control when the situation calls for it. Fred and George, who better to run and experiments, and create new things for us to use. Tracey and Ginny, we could ask for no better potions mistresses. Everyone, I know it sounds like a lot, and that's because it is. The wizarding world has become increasingly stagnate, and our government corrupted. It's our duty to change that."

"You're talking treason, Harry," Alicia began. "Listen to yourself. Force laws to change. An army. Reforming the education at Hogwarts."

"Not treason, Alicia. Think about it yourself. All our problems with the goblins have come from what? They hate us why? What about veela

and werewolves? Why do they hate living in Britain? People fear what they don't understand, and they attempt to control what they want. Our laws make it unsafe for any non-humans to live here, because we enslave them and drive them off. Even werewolves are usually decent people. They can't control the fact that they are cursed. It's the same with muggleborns. They are hated for being what they are, not for what they can be. These laws need to change in order for the wizarding world to move forward. Tradition is great, but when it impedes progress, and allows the prejudiced treatment of those who should have the same rights as the rest of us, it needs to be changed. Have you took a look at your class schedule, and looked up which classes are taught at Hogwarts? We have a total of three classes a day, max. Over time, several courses have been dropped, and I intend to bring them back. By reforming the education here, we can allow more classes to be taken each day, with a greater variety of choices once students reach a certain year. Hogwarts is called the greatest school for witchcraft and wizardry in the world, yet the standards here have dropped tremendously over the years. It is due time for Hogwarts to regain her past glory."

"For some reason, Harry, I actually agree with you," Alicia said slowly.

"So do I," Katie said.

"I think we all do, to some extent," Sirius replied. "There are a great deal of changes that need to be made, and there's no time like the present to begin. I'm honestly very proud of you all. In a few years, your generation will take over, and the world will be yours to run, to forge a brighter future for those who come after us. Our purpose in life is to make something of ourselves, and to work to make the world a better place for our children and those we love. Nothing would make me prouder than to watch each and every one of you, especially you Harry, come into your own."

Noone said a thing. None of them, save Harry, knew Sirius that well, but he had just said that he believed in them all. It would be hard, but everyone in the room was grateful and gave a silent oath to fulfill every expectation and more.

"Thank you Sirius. You don't know how much that means to us."

"Yes I do, Pup. Those are almost the exact words that my own grandfather once spoke to me. But enough of that. We need to get outta here. I'm starved."

"Oh, right," Harry said laughing as he jumped up from his spot between Gabby and Ginny. Harry waved his hand over the glass of the table in front of him, and a pile of portal stones appeared. "Everyone take one, and choose a password. Don't worry if someone gets hold of the stone or hears the password, since only you will be able to use it. Next time you want to come here, just turn it over three times and say the password, and do the same to leave."

Shortly after, everyone had a stone in their hand, and the Weasley twins, followed by Neville and Lavender, were the first to leave as they each disappeared silently into thin air. Finally, only Harry, Gabby, and Ginny remained. Giving Harry a kiss on the cheek, Gabby turned her stone over and disappeared.

Just as Harry was about to leave, Ginny caught hold of his arm. Turning to look at her, he could see the tears in her eyes. "What's wrong Ginny?"

She looked down. "N-Nothing."

"Don't say that. Don't be afraid to tell me. I won't get mad, I promise. And I want to be there for you, for anything you need, no matter how small."

Ginny looked back up at him, pleading with her eyes. "I know, Harry. I just wanted to spend some more time alone with you. I don't want you to go so soon, but I know you have to."

Once again, Harry found himself with his arms wrapped around the petite redhead. "Shh, don't cry Ginny. We have all year, and you can join us every day. If you want, we can even have dinner here together tomorrow night. I wish I could say tonight, but there are a few things that I need to take care of after dinner."

Wiping the tears from her eyes, Ginny looked up from Harry's chest. "Y-You'd do that?"

"Of course, m' love. How can I refuse such a gorgeous girl trying to spend some time alone with me?"

"Prat!" Ginny smacked Harry across the shoulder, but nonetheless looked pleased.

"So that's a yes, I take it?"

"Of course it is, and you better not be late. Five o'clock tomorrow so we can hang out for a while before dinner."

"I'll be here, Ginny. Promise," Harry said, letting go of her. "I think we should get going now, before people start wondering."

"Yeah. See you tomorrow, Harry."

"Take care, Ginny."

With that, Harry and Ginny both disappeared, heading to separate locales.

Great Hall, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Fortunately, dinner went by eventless. Harry honestly didn't think he could handle much more excitement that day. Still there was the issue of Christine Granger. She had told Hermione and himself everything that had happened up to that point about her family dying, her beatings, and how she was rescued and brought to them.

None of that explained why Harry found bindings on her magical core bearing Dumbledore's magical signature. Things got even worse when Harry saw Dumbledore notice Christine enter the Great Hall with them. The look of recognition and astonishment that the Headmaster quickly hid, was noticed by Harry at once. Harry knew the truth almost immediately, staring at him from Dumbledore's twinkling eyes. The Headmaster did not want Christine at Hogwarts for some reason, and had taken steps to prevent her from being enrolled.

As his eyes passed Dumbledore, and settled on Snape, Harry was pleased to find that the potions master gave him a curious look, although still filled with a great deal of loathing. Harry would have to fix that.

The rest of dinner went by quickly, and watching everyone chatting amongst themselves, Harry was finally beginning to feel as if things were back on the right track. Even Daphne was not as withdrawn as she normally was, though she still sat on the far end, next to Tracey.

Things seemed more or less normal, and the girls seemed to have accepted what Harry had told them the night before. Not all of them were excited about it, of course. Harry never would have expected that. But they at least seemed willing to give his idea a shot, and none of them treated him any different than they would a normal friend. Harry was thankful beyond words for that. He had only been able to really spend any time with Gabby and Daphne, to get their view on things, and Hermione was coming along a bit better, though Harry still felt that there was something there to talk about. He had been able to talk to Susan and Hannah both during class, but wasn't that different? How would he be able to get each one of them alone, and really talk to them... really get to understand where they were coming from? It would take time, that was certain, but for now he had other things to worry about.

Seeing Hermione and Christine get up to leave, Harry quickly told Gabby that he would meet her back at their room later, and hurried out of the great hall after them.

"Hermione, Christine, wait up!" Harry called after them. They both stopped, and Hermione turned around.

"What is it, Harry? We were just headed back to the common room."

"I know Hermione, but there's something I need to speak to the two of you about," Harry answered cautiously. "I don't think either of you are going to like it."

Christine's brows furrowed and Hermione frowned, neither one having the slightest clue where Harry was going with this. "What's wrong, Harry? I'm sure whatever it is, we'll be able to work it out, won't we?"

"Listen," Harry began slowly. "Earlier, when I checked Christine for any other traces of magic on her, I came upon something."

"What did you find?" Hermione's head perked.

"Hermione, Christine is a witch." Hermione and Christine both gasped.

"That's not possible, Harry!" Hermione insisted. "Christine never recieved a Hogwarts letter. We would have both known if she had ever shown any trace of being magical."

"That may be true, Hermione," Harry replied carefully. "But then how do explain away her magical core that I found when I examined her? There were bindings there. Dumbledore bound her magic. I don't know when and I don't know why, but I intend to find out."

"That doesn't make any sense. Dumbledore would never do such a thing!" Hermione insisted. "Dumbledore is the greatest light wizard the world has ever seen. Surely, you could be mistaken, can't you?"

Harry couldn't believe what he was hearing. After all she had seen in the last day and after all the memories she had seen, she still believed Dumbledore of being incapable of such manipulation?

"Hermione, stop and thinkg for a moment," Harry snapped angrily. "How are you still that blind? I'm not mistaken. The bindings had Dumbledore's magical signature and I traced them back to him. If you don't believe me, let's go ask him. Personally, I want an explanation and I think Christine, at least, deserves one. Afterward, unless Dumbledore does it himself, I intend to remove those binds, so Christine can be sorted into a House and join us here at Hogwarts. She deserves that chance, don't you agree?"

Hermione stood stock still for a moment, shaken by Harry's outburst. How could she have been so stupid? The entire last twenty four hours were more than enough to shake her trust in the Headmaster, but could she really believe him of such evil? Could she really believe the kindly Dumbledore would intrude that far into a child's life, taking away what they were? Thinking for a minute, Hermione couldn't fault Harry for being angry with her. She was supposed to be brilliant, and yet she still missed something that was right in front of her face all along.

"I agree with you, Harry," Hermione answered, carefully choosing each word. Christine appeared relieved, as if she had been afraid that Hermione was going to snap back at Harry. "Anyone born with

magic in their blood deserves the chance to learn all they can. Noone, not even Dumbledore, has the right to take it away."

"So you'll come with us then... when I take Christine to see Dumbledore?" Harry asked.

Hermione looked scandalous. "Are you daft? Of course I'm coming! Come on!" The next second, Harry found himself being whisked along by Hermione, along with Christine, headed straight for the Headmaster's office.

After they had passed along two seperate corridors, Harry noticed that Christine was having a bit more difficulty than he was at keeping her balance while being dragged along by Hermione. "Hermione, stop for a second would you? We can walk by ourselves just fine, thanks."

Hermione stopped, and let go of both of their wrists, looking horrified at her cousin as Christine rubbed her shins, and leaned up against the wall catching her breath. "Oh, I'm sorry Christine!"

"Don't worry about it, Mione." Christine glanced up at her tearful cousin and gave her a small smile. That seemed to cheer Hermione up.

"I can't believe I missed it before. It's so obvious, it's brilliant. It is mad, mind you, but it sounds exactly like something Dumbledore would do."

"Breathe, Hermione," Harry chuckled. "So, what did you figure out? What's so obvious?"

Hermione carefully regarded both Harry and her cousin. "Harry," she began. "Christine and I spent most of our childhoods together. Neither one of us had very many friends, for obvious reasons. But we always got along really well. Now think for a moment. Why were both my parents and myself so willing to agree to the marriage contract between us? Do you honestly believe that we would have been half as tempted, as susceptible, if we knew from the start, that Christine would be joining me here at Hogwarts? I believe he chose me because of my aunt and uncle. They were a bit prudish, if you know what I mean. Sorry Christine."

Christine shrugged. "No problem, Mione. It's true, and we've always been honest with each other. I know you loved them as much as I did."

Harry stood at the gargoyle as he watched the girls hug. Thinking about it, he could definitely agree with Hermione, but he hoped he was wrong, just this once.

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

Sitting in his office, Albus debated with himself over how he could have let things get so out of hand. He was expecting the young Lord Potter's arrival at any moment. No doubt, he would be accompanied by the young Miss Granger, and her cousin as well. No matter, the contract was signed and made official weeks ago, so no harm could come of them knowing the truth now.

It had been very disturbing when Albus had seen Miss Christine Granger enter the great hall for dinner, along with the entire Emrys House, and even worse when he learned of the events which had occurred at Malfoy Manor earlier that day. 'What else can go wrong?' he wondered.

"Come in Mr. Potter, and both Miss Grangers," he said quietly to the door, just before Harry could knock.

A moment later Harry, followed by Hermione and Christine, were seated comfortably in front of the Headmaster's desk. Christine was seated closest to Fawkes, and took an immediate liking to the phoenix as he flew over to rest on her leg, where she absentmindedly stroked the top of his head.

"Yes, yes... have a seat children," Albus said soothingly, while inwardly he prayed that he hadn't messed up too bad. His relationship with Harry was on rocky grounds already, and he wanted more than anything to help Harry to prepare for his inevitable confrontation with Voldemort. He knew that Harry would likely never trust him completely again, and who could blame him? It was... rather difficult... for Dumbledore to consider passing the torch to Harry, even though he was already showing a tremendous aptitude for leadership, and was more than sufficiently powerful enough to handle the responsibilities. Could he really be sure that Harry would not make the same mistakes that he himself once made?

"Lemon drop?" Albus said calmly.

"No thanks, Professor," Harry replied. Harry was seething at how at ease Dumbledore seemed. Didn't he realize that there was a problem? Surely, the moment he saw Christine, he had to have known that they would be coming for answers shortly. After all, no one could be that thick, except maybe Crabbe and Goyle. However, Harry did note that Dumbledore certainly looked as if he was feeling every one of his years. His shoulders were slumped, and his eyes downcast, a defeated man. Harry could tell that the Headmaster had been doing some serious thinking.

"We wanted to talk to you, Professor Dumbledore," Hermione stated matter-of-factly. "We wanted to ask you some questions... about my cousin Christine. You see-," but she was cut off by Dumbledore raising his hand.

"I know why you are here, Miss Granger. And you are correct, in all of your reasoning."

"S-So I'm really a witch?" Christine choked out.

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows. "Oh yes. And quite a powerful one at that. That is why I had to bind your magic years ago when you were almost five. Sadly, heard what had happened, I knew immediately what was wrong. You see, your magic reminded me of someone... someone who had once been very dear to my heart, and I could not bear the thought of allowing another child destroy herself and her family like that."

"You're confusing all of us, Professor Dumbledore."

"Naturally, I wouldn't expect you to understand just yet, Miss Granger," Dumbledore answered. "Let me explain. As they grow older, magical children often have bursts of uncontrolled magic. This accidental magic is normally just small things, but can range up to the disastrous. Your cousin Christine, for example, has always been exceedingly powerful, and has a trace of Faerie blood running through her veins. This is an old blood, thought to be extinct, and her magic is far wilder in nature than your own. Because of the destructive nature of her magic, your aunt and uncle asked me to bind it in order to protect her. I was expecting to fulfill the last part of

my bargain, and release the bonds on her eleventh birthday, but I never heard from them. Sadly, I have only found out why a short time before you all arrived here in my office."

"Professor, I thought the last known witch or wizard to be of Faerie descent was Morgan Le Fay?"

"To my knowledge, you are correct, Miss Granger," Professor Dumbledore said kindly. "I was very curious, and began to research the matter myself after I met Christine. In the last six years, I am ashamed to say that even with all my resources, which are considerable I assure you, I have found no other trace of a witch or wizard with the Faerie blood. There may very well be ancient and powerful spells upon their line, because there is also no explanation for why your cousin has muggle descendents as far back as I could trace, yet the blood in her veins runs pure with some of the most ancient of magics."

Hermione looked thoughtful. None of them said anything, but Harry could almost hear the gears turning in both girls' heads. This was far from what they had expected, and Harry was dumbfounded when the Headmaster locked eyes with him, lowering all of his own occlumency shields before drawing Harry into his own mind as he pushed the memories toward Harry. At first, Harry wasn't sure whether to believe that the memories were real, but he could feel a profound sense of sadness and regret coming from the old man, and at that moment Harry knew that they were finally on equal ground.

Christine and Hermione were both collecting their thoughts when Harry coughed slightly, to get their attention. "For once, Headmaster, I believe you completely. I know I may be mistaken, but I am willing to place my trust in you again, starting now. Hopefully, one day you will regain a margin of the respect I had for you. Don't get me wrong, we still have things to discuss, but I wish to continue that at a later date, perhaps Friday after classes?"

"That would be acceptable, Mr. Potter. I have a staff meeting around four, so I believe we can arrange our meeting for five o'clock."

"Agreed," Harry replied curtly. "Am I to assume that you will remove these bonds, so Christine can be sorted? I'm sure Hagrid would be delighted to take her to Diagon Alley tomorrow to get her school supplies. I'll send a note with him, which will allow them to withdraw

enough money from my own vaults to get everything, with some left over in case she wants to splurge."

"You'd do that?" Christine had tears in her eyes, and both she and Hermione were looking gratefully at Harry.

"Of course. What are friends for? I have more than I could ever spend, and even if I didn't, you need it more than I do right now. Just promise me you'll study hard, and do your best to become a great witch, and that's all the thanks I'll ever need."

"Of course I will!" Christine half shouted. "I'll become the greatest witch alive. And when we leave Hogwarts, I promise that I'll pay you back once I get a decent career started."

"Don't," Harry interjected. "I don't want to be paid back. Just remember that I'm always here if you need anything, so don't be afraid to ask. I have so much, far more than I'll ever need, and it's a joy to spread a little happiness to my friends and family."

"That settles it," Professor Dumbledore said, clapping his hands together. "I will now remove your binds, Miss Granger. Afterward, you will be sorted into your new House. And tomorrow, I will have Hagrid take you to get your school supplies in Diagon Alley. Please allow me to be the first to welcome you formally into the Wizarding World, and to Hogwarts."

Emrys Dorm, Hogwarts, Northern Scotland

A short half hour later, Harry found himself showing the two excstatic witches through the door to the Emrys common room. Not surprisingly, the Sorting Hat had almost immediately decided to keep the cousins together, and placed Christine in Emrys House. Harry could swear he had never seen Hermione this giggly, but here she was. Hermione and Christine were giggling enough to put even Parvati and Lavender to shame. So, it was a bewildered Harry that was met in the common room by the Weasley twins, as Hermione showed Christine around the dorm, all under the watchful eye of Fred Weasley.

"Oi, Fred! Get a grip," Harry laughed. "She'll be here all year, ya know."

Fred jumped at the sound of his voice. "Huh? Who?" Harry noted that Fred still didn't take his eyes off Christine, and his eyes looked a bit glazed over.

"Christine, you twit," Harry replied pokingly. "She was sorted into Emrys less than fifteen minutes ago."

"Really? I thought she was a muggle?" George asked.

"Nope, she's a witch, just like Hermione."

Fred looked pleased, still watching Hermione and Christine poke around one of the bookshelves. "You don't say? Has anyone given her a tour yet? I daresay that George and I can make it much easier for her to find her way around."

"And get my balls handed to me by Angelina? You're mad! You're on your own there, Fred."

Fred looked at his twin curiously, and Harry noticed the edge of his mouth twitch. "I thought you said there was nothing going on between you two?"

"There isn't," George insisted. "That doesn't mean that I don't want to keep my options open. And I definitely don't want her to beat me senseless with my own bat. She's a human bludger, that one."

Harry and Fred both started laughing, but were cut off by a shriek from George. Angelina had obviously heard him, and was now dragging him by the ear down the hallway to their left. "I heard that, George Weasley! I'll show you a human bludger!"

Angelina continued ranting all the way down the hallway, where she and George disappeared into a room, but Harry couldn't quite make out what she said. George, on the other hand, was looking back at them the entire way, pleading with them to have mercy and save him. Harry and Fred stood there with small grins, waving a sweet goodbye until they disappeared. Then they burst out in laughter.

"You think he'll be alright?" Harry asked breathlessly after a few minutes, still holding his gut.

"Oh yea, Angelina got hold of him like this all last year," Fred replied with a wide grin. "One of these days, George will admit that he gets on Angelina's nerves on purpose, just so he can spend a couple hours in a room alone with her."

"It'll be a while," Harry said sagely.

Fred looked at Harry, his eyes bright with amusement. "I know," he replied with a broad grin. "That's what makes it so entertaining to watch."

Harry had to agree and he said so. "Hey Fred, is there any chance I can get the map from you right now? Only I've got my own plans for tonight, and I really should get going."

Fred reached into his pocket and handed the Marauder's map to Harry. "Here you are. Just remember to get it back to us when you're done with it."

"Actually, I was planning on giving you each a new map, once I've made some improvements of my own," Harry replied smiling. "This map isn't even half complete, and there are several other functions I plan to attach to it."

"Sounds good to me," Fred replied. "What other functions do you have in mind?"

"You'll just have to wait and see, just like the rest." Harry turned and headed down the hallway to his and Gabby's room, while Fred turned and headed off toward where Hermione and Christine had disappeared.

The door was open, and Harry stood there quietly, watching Gabby sitting on the foot of the bed, with Selene perched on her lap. Before Harry could say anything, Gabby turned her head toward him and flashed a brilliant smile.

"I've been waiting for you," Gabby said.

Harry walked to their trunk, and opened a compartment that he had locked, in order to keep Gabby from knowing the surprise he had planned for her. "I'm sorry I kept you waiting, Love. I had some things to take care of."

"I heard," Gabby replied quietly, humming soothingly to Selene. "I'm really happy for them, Hermione and Christine I mean."

"So am I," Harry said, pulling out a small package, and slipping it into his robes. "I was thinking. It's a beautiful night, and I was wondering if you'd like to join me for a walk out on the grounds."

That got Gabrielle's attention immediately. "What do you have in mind, Harry? Am I finally going to find out what you hid from me that day in Diagon Alley?"

Harry perked his head, looking thoughtful. "Mm, you might," he replied playfully. "Does that mean you'll join me? I really think you'll enjoy yourself."

"Just let me get my cloak on."

Twenty minutes later, Harry and Gabrielle were side by side, walking together beside the Black Lake. As they walked, Harry had placed his arm around her waist, and Gabby had leaned her head on his shoulder.

Harry was glad he had picked that night. The moon was bright in the cloudless skies, and the stars were out in all their brilliance. Looking out at the Lake, Harry could see how the water rippled softly in the night breeze, and the surface of the lake shimmered softly, reflecting the light of the moon and stars above. In the distance, he could see the trees of the forbidden forest swaying softly in the wind, and the air carried the scent of untamed nature in from the mountains that were all around Hogwarts.

Harry could feel the magic tingling all around them, pervading their senses, and everything around them. The air itself hummed with a natural calmness as they took in the beauty around them. Harry regretted having never taken the time before to really take in his surroundings while at Hogwarts.

"So," Gabby said finally, jerking Harry out of his thoughts. Harry noticed that Gabby seemed to be feeling many of the same things he was. "What was that surprise?"

She and Harry were now leaning against a large boulder that sat at the edge of the Black Lake, and they were looking out at it together. At her question, Harry brought the package out from a pocket deep inside his robes, and enlarged it before handing it to Gabby. "Here, I thought you might like to open it. It's for you, after all."

Smiling softly, Gabby took the package from Harry, and carefully unwrapped it, gasping as she saw what it was. "Harry, how did you get one of these? They're really rare and hard to get, especially here in Britain."

"I know," Harry replied, pleased at Gabby's reaction. "The fools at the Ministry make it even harder, seeing as flying carpets are outlawed. The only reason they even made them illegal is to boost the profits of broom companies. This one, I had custom made, just for you. From what Griphook told me, it wasn't easy tracking down a carpet maker, and it was even harder to get the design. It's an ancient design of the Veela, one that has never been seen outside the Veela Sanctuary throne room until now. The way I hear it, your grandmother only agreed to help after she was told who it was for."

Gabby looked down at the carpet in her hands. Tears were threatening to overwhelm her as she looked at the silver, veela hair embroidering, surrounding scenes of the ancient Veela Enclave, before the civil wars between the Veela, Merpeople, and Sirens laid most of it to waste. The hair, scales, and tears of all three creatures were used to create the magnificent scenes and landscape that seemed to come alive in the weavings. The serenity of it all washed over Gabby, and she could feel the prolonged sadness of her people, tears of angst streaming down her face as she felt the misery of her ancestors and their cousins as they declared war on one another. It was all there in the weavings of the carpet. The scenes spoke the history directly to her heart, and the sheer beauty of it all overwhelmed Gabrielle.

Sobbing softly, Gabby ran her fingers over the center of the carpet, which did not change. There, in the center, were three hairs, one from her grandmother, one from the Siren Matriarch, and one from the Queen of the Merpeople. Together, they formed a triangle around a small circle that was formed by unicorn hair, which glowed brightly from the freely given unicorn blood that covered it. The unicorn's blessing. Gabby could feel it. It had almost two thousand years since the last recording of a unicorn freely giving its blood

blessing to anyone, and that witch had been her ancestor, the first Veela. Every veela, full-blooded or not, was taught the story at a very early age, to remember where they came from, and to be thankful for the blessing that lasted a thousand generations. The blessing of a creature of complete innocence and purity.

"It's beautiful, Harry," Gabby said almost to quietly for him to make out. Her fingers stroked the seemingly weightless carpet, and words failed her. Words couldn't express her gratitude, or any of the other feelings that were coursing through her, but Gabby already knew that Harry understood. The look in his eyes as he watched her said it all. Harry knew how much it meant to her, and she was thankful beyond words that he had kept this from her until now, the perfect time.

A few minutes later, Harry still hadn't said a word, and Gabby let the carpet slip from her fingers, where it flattened itself out in mid air, at the perfect height for Harry and Gabby to get on it.

Later, almost four hours after they had left, Harry carried a sleeping Gabrielle into their room, and laid her carefully on their bed before covering her up. They had ridden together, silently most of the time, with Gabby cuddled in his arms for almost two hours. After a while, they had began talking... about Hogwarts, what they had planned, and their own future together. They had floatly over the Black Lake and Forbidden Forest, high in the sky, and Gabby had eventually fallen asleep, leaning back into Harry's arms as she watched the sky.

Now, Harry brushed a piece of hair off Gabby's face, and kissed her cheek softly. Gabby was happy, and so was he, but now he had one last thing to setup before he could give in to the blissfulness of sleep.

"I'll be back, Love," Harry whispered quietly in her ear. Harry then backed into the shadows near the wall and vanished.

Author's Notes:

For those of you who feel that I have not dealt harshly enough with Lucius, fear not. I still have need of him further on in the story, so for now, he will remain. Promised blood and gore for Lucius next chapter.

BTW, for those who noticed what the 1st of Harry's animagus forms is, and think that he was the one who delivered the letter to Dumbledore, you might want to go back and reread the chapters dealing with it. Harry denied to himself that he delivered it, yet the description fits him to a T. I'll leave it at this. As far as Harry knows... he did NOT deliver it, and no there were no memory spells cast on him.

Anyways, thanks to each and every one of you who have read and reviewed my story so far. I sincerely hope that it will continue to be up to your standards, and that you will continue to look forward to the updates.

Chp10